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THE STORY OF MY DICTATORSHIP

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For Liberty to fight;
We want no blaze of murderous guns,
To struggle for the right.
Our spears and swords are printed words,
The mind our battle plain;
We've won such victories before,
And so we shall again."

—CHARLES MACKAY.

WITH PREFACE BY

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON

NEW YORK
Sterling Publishing Co.
102 FULTON STREET
1894

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PREFACE.

MANY people will read an allegory who would shrink from a treatise. If John Bunyan had neglected to clothe his ideas with the alluring garment of a story, it is doubtful whether *Pilgrim* would have made much progress in his own generation, to say nothing of his unimpeded march through the centuries. For humanity loves to see truths incarnated in individual forms. The concrete is easier to grasp than the abstract, and one who finds a sermon on courage tiresome glows with enthusiasm over the mythical hero who embodies and reveals it in brave deeds. Under the guise of dreams one can draw with a freer hand, without the prosaic limitations of wakefulness. And always a dilemma can be escaped by the dreamer opening his eyes at the right moment.

In this unpretending "Story of My Dictatorship" the author prefers to conceal his identity, and even to me who am requested to write this brief introduction, he is as completely hidden as the author of the letters of Junius. Nevertheless, despite my ignorance of his name, I have no question as to his nature, for his story reveals it. He permits his readers to know him intimately. If they are constituted like me they will be grateful for the acquaintance. He has a fundamental truth to expound, and does it withal so attractively and with so much fairness that one can easily imagine him a disputant in Plato's Republic.

Nothing has yet been discovered more helpful to the truth-seeker than the Socratic method of discussion, which is here so clearly applied. The questions of the doubters are searching and critical, and the answers match them

with fairness and sincerity. Sophistry or evasion cannot serve.

The right to the use of the earth is becoming a burning question, compelling the attention of thinkers and reformers of diverse faiths. Of the wrongfulness of the present system of land monopoly, and the necessity of equal access for all to the natural source of wealth, there is a growing consensus of opinion. The author of the present work desires to unite workers upon this primal point of agreement, and to dissuade them from emphasizing ultimate differences. Only the duty that lies nearest deserves immediate consideration. Individualists and Socialists alike discern the evil of landlordism and aim to correct it. With its abolition will doubtless come the solution of other waiting social problems having their root in this unhealthy soil. Therefore, brothers, let us close up to attack the common enemy, and postpone the warfare with each other until this victory is gained. Possibly the goals that now seem so far apart are in truth separated only by our imperfect vision.

Such is the spirit of this dream of humanity, soothing and healing in its tone, and calculated to dissipate prejudices instead of stirring antagonisms. It is seldom that such an object is attempted without weak concessions and false sentiment. Here, however, the logic and statement are uncompromising, and in no whit is the uttermost truth sacrificed.

So I bespeak for this new messenger in the field of reform the cordial welcome of all lovers of their kind. May it girdle the earth with its evangel of common sense and human justice.

WM. LLOYD GARRISON.

BOSTON, April 4, 1894.

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THE STORY OF

MY DICTATORSHIP.

CHAPTER I.

A POLITICAL OUTING, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

THE legend about Mahomet visiting the celestial regions, wandering all over the seven heavens, encountering countless vicissitudes on his way, and returning to earth in time to pick up a pitcher he had accidentally upset on leaving, and that before a single drop of its contents had time to escape, does not now seem to me so incredible a feat as when I first read the story. My own adventure may not be quite so marvelous as that of the great prophet, but at any rate it would come in as a good second. To be "wafted by a fav'ring gale" from the humble station of a retiring taxpayer to the exalted office of Lord Protector; to hold that office for a full twelve months; to crowd into this short span of time the work of a whole and possibly of several generations; and to accomplish all this between sunset and sunrise is a performance unparalleled by anything in history, and is comparable only to the miraculous journey of Islam's renowned prophet.

But I had better tell my tale from the beginning.

Fine weather, good company, and the prospect of a much-needed rest enticed me away from my work to

join the members of the local Democratic Club on a pleasure excursion. As a means of recreation the outing was, as far as myself was concerned, a complete failure. There can be no *mental* rest, as I have discovered to my cost, among a crowd of earnest, enthusiastic politicians, especially at a time when the industries of a country are paralyzed by a great strike, and a great constitutional measure is being the subject of animated debate both in and out of Parliament. I might have known as much. Yet now, after the event, I am not quite sure but that the prospect of being able to listen to a discussion of the politics of the day may have been—unconsciously—one of the motives which made me respond to the invitation. Be this as it may, I went; and it was not long before we were in the very thick of the social problem, and the pleasure party soon constituted itself into a kind of debating society.

There was no lack of speakers. Everyone present had something important to say, and almost everybody wanted to speak at the same time. This, however, proved impracticable, inasmuch as it is somewhat difficult to follow a dozen or so speeches if delivered "concurrently." So the necessity for parliamentary methods soon made itself felt. We abandoned our original project of a tramp over the moors, and settled down under a group of trees, with myself as Chairman of our impromptu Parliament. Needless to say that every conceivable phrase of the social problem was discussed, and that there were as many remedies proposed as there were speakers. My task as chairman was not always an easy one; at times I had great difficulty in curbing the impatience of those whose dissent from the views propounded manifested itself

in a manner not strictly parliamentary. But on the whole, things passed off very well; and an animated, and not altogether profitless discussion was carried on, until we were reminded by the setting sun that it was time to return.

By the time I returned home that evening my head was whirling. Although I had not joined in the discussion itself, I was an attentive listener to the several views that had been propounded, some of them with great ability. There was plenty to stimulate thought notwithstanding, and I should rather say *because of*, the irreconcilable inferences drawn by several speakers, and with equal skill and plausibility, from the same group of facts.

Against my will, I could not but try to harmonize in my mind these conflicting statements, and to separate facts from inferences. But the more I thought, the greater became my confusion. One thing, however, struck me very forcibly, and that was that each of the various schools of political thought had a certain substratum of truth not to be ignored. I recognized that each of them saw the same truth, but saw part of it only, and that from this partial recognition arose all the confusion. As is usual in such discussions, they all paid more attention to their points of disagreement than to those on which they agreed, and so the latter were overlooked, while the former were accentuated. And I could not but feel how detrimental this was to their common aim, and how far better it would be for the cause of humanity if, instead of uncompromisingly opposing one another, the members of all the different schools would seek to ascertain how far they could honestly support each other's plans.

As I sat in my easy-chair that evening, reflecting

over the day's proceedings, my thoughts became more and more confused. Time and space seemed annihilated. Scene after scene passed before my vision in rapid succession, until at last I found myself in Trafalgar Square, in the midst of a surging, noisy crowd, and then all became again clear and natural.

I knew what had happened. There had been a General Election, Democracy had been triumphant, and the people had assembled here to determine the kind of reform that was needed to secure equal rights and duties to all. All kinds of proposals were being made, but none met with universal approval; and the people began in despair to exclaim that Democracy was a failure, since its leaders could not agree on a workable plan. I trembled, for I saw that unless some agreement between the different factions could be brought about, the cause of Democracy might be discredited for all future time. With the intention of bringing about such a reconciliation, I forced myself on to the platform, and spoke as follows:

"Friends, do not despair; your differences are not so great as you seem to think, for are not your aims identical? Your only differences are as to the means to be adopted for carrying them into effect."

Here I was interrupted by shouts—"That's just the trouble. And if we don't know what means to adopt, how can we govern the country?"

"That's very simple," I said.

"Do it, then!" they all shouted at once.

"But I have not the power. I only intended to make suggestions." The latter part of my remark was drowned in the noise.

"Let's give him the power!"

"If he says he can do it, let him do it!"

"Let us elect him Lord Protector!" and other such cries reached my ears.

I waved my hands, trying to restore silence, and to explain that I did not intend to be Lord Protector; that such a course would be contrary to the spirit of Democracy; that, instead of Democracy, it would be establishing a Dictatorship, which would be undesirable. But I could not make myself heard by the crowd, while the leaders on the platform, as if glad to be relieved of a responsibility, said, in a menacing manner, "You are not going to back out of this." And the Chairman, telling me to sit down, rose and read from a paper in his hand as follows:

"Be enacted by the Democracy of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, that Citizen"—here there were shouts of joy, and I only caught the concluding sentence, "be Lord Protector——"

I interrupted indignantly—"Say, rather, Dictator."

But the Chairman took no notice of my remark, and repeated, "Be Lord Protector of the Realm." And he then added, "All those in favor of same, please signify in the usual manner."

A forest of hands, such as I have seen on one or two occasions in Trafalgar Square, went up.

Thus I was unexpectedly, and against my wish, made absolute Dictator of the United Kingdom.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW CONSTITUTION.

My sudden elevation to the exalted office of Lord Protector displeased me as much as it seemed to give general satisfaction.

"What mockery," I thought to myself, "that the triumphs of Democracy should end in a Dictatorship; and I, above all men, to be Dictator!"

How often had I not inveighed against Monarchical institutions and "one-man worship" of any kind, as being of the essence of despotism. And how often had I not wished to be absolute Monarch for a few hours only, so that I might have power to resign for myself, heirs, and successors, and make Monarchical rule impossible for all future times. My wishes were now fulfilled, and now was my opportunity to redeem my promise.

My first thought was to jump up, and, in virtue of my new office, declare the Republic for all future time. In the next moment I hesitated. How is a Republic possible with such discordant elements, trained for centuries in a school inimical to Republican institutions? No! that would mean a return to confusion. My first duty was to make of the people Republicans. If I should succeed in *this*, then the Republic would follow as a matter of course.

"A speech! A speech!" shouted the impatient masses. There was no escape, and but little time for

reflection. I had boasted that I could establish happiness, prosperity, and, above all things, unanimity: and this promise must be made good. I rose and said:

"I am willing to be your servant and manage the affairs of State for you, but not as a Tzar of Russia. To this end it is not enough that you invest me with power to act; you must also define my duties. In other words, you must frame a Constitution of which I am to be the executor."

Shouts of approbation came from all sides. They actually were all agreed.

"A Constitution"—"Frame one"—"Suggest one, and so forth, came from the crowd.

"There is no need to frame one, as the only Constitution worthy of the name and worthy of a Democracy is indelibly written in every heart. See whether I am speaking the truth—whether your hearts will respond. *You all desire to be free.* Is that so?"

There never was a more hearty response made by a crowd than the one with which these words were greeted.

"Well then," I continued, "our Constitution will be very brief, and one with the wording of which you are already familiar, though not with its spirit. It runs as follows:

"'Every individual to have equal and inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!'"

Again all agreed, and cheered lustily.

"This, then, shall be our Constitution, and all the law there is or shall be. It clearly defines the rights and duties of every citizen, and at the same time marks out the duties which you have delegated to me."

This last sentence was received in profound silence. I saw that it was not quite clear to them how these

few words could have all the meaning I attributed to them. Therefore, without appearing to notice their embarrassment, I continued:

"If *all* have an equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, then it is clear that no one must be interfered with in the exercise of this right. Therefore, while free to do as you please, you must allow equal liberty to every one of your neighbors."

"Hear, hear," from all sides.

"So that your *duties* consist in respecting these rights of your neighbors. And my duty consists in guarding these rights, and to secure them, without exception, to every individual member of the State."

Once more I had the assembly with me.

"This Constitution shall not only be our only and valid law, but the touchstone of right and wrong. Any enactment of the Executive, or any private act, by whomsoever committed, that runs counter to this Constitution, shall be deemed an offense not to be tolerated. This shall be my first official proclamation. My second is, that all men shall have free access to all the opportunities of Nature, and that because without such access to the sources of nature the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness is impossible. My third proclamation prohibits, as a matter of course, any person or persons to take from any other person or persons the fruits of their exertions under any pretense whatever, except it be the voluntary gift of him to whom such things rightfully belong. Therefore, from this hour I abolish all taxes whatever, direct or indirect."

This announcement created surprise and a good deal of dissatisfaction.

"You can't govern a State without revenue," came from all sides.

"No," I replied. "But the State is not without revenue. For inasmuch as the opportunities of Nature belong to all alike; and inasmuch as, in the nature of things, these opportunities cannot be enjoyed by several at the same time——"

"Speak plain!" "We do not understand your riddles," and like protests reached me from several sides at the same time.

"Well, then," I said, "what are called 'the opportunities of Nature' consist in soil, climate, locality, water, etc., in short, the forces of Nature, all of which appertain to land. But the same locality cannot, obviously, be occupied by more than one person or family. Such person or family, therefore, in order to secure to them the harvest of their labors, would have to have the monopoly of such locality. But inasmuch as thereby they enjoy a monopoly of such lands, each occupier would have to pay to the community whatever natural advantages accrue to him from such exclusive possession."

"This is very confusing," remonstrated several.

"Plainly then it means this, that all former taxes are abolished, and in their stead is substituted a tax on *land-values*, irrespective of improvements, at the rate of twenty shillings in the pound. This tax, belonging to the community, will be used for communal purposes. All former contracts, unless conflicting with our Constitution, shall be respected as heretofore; and no one to be disturbed in his present possessions. This is all for the present."

This announcement produced general dissatisfaction, and the crowd became very noisy.

"What! Tax the poor farmer, and allow the capitalist to escape?"

"And allow the workers to be ground down by the rich?"

"Not even a property or income tax?"

These and many other objections were raised, to reply to which, amid such a tumult, was clearly out of the question. I had to make use, therefore, of the authority with which I had been invested. After the noise had somewhat subsided I said:

"You have imposed upon me the duty to secure to all equal rights and equal duties. This is, to my mind, the only way in which this can be done. If I am wrong, the remedy lies in your own hands. Anyone who can show that he does not possess the liberties guaranteed to him by the Constitution shall have his grievance removed. For this purpose I shall now retire into my office and listen, one by one, to all those who have cause to complain.

Whereupon I left the platform, followed by the surging crowd.

CHAPTER III.

A LOAFER.

THE next instant I found myself seated in my audience chamber, with the whole crowd pressing in upon me, each eager to be first. Foremost among them was a man whom, for brevity' sake, I will describe as a Loafer. The guards tried to push him back to make room for others more respectably dressed. But I interposed, saying, "Under the New Constitution all have equal rights by virtue of their citizenship, and not by virtue of the kind of coat they wear. First come, first served."

With this it seemed as if I had recovered a little of my lost ground. The man himself seemed delighted, and thanked me warmly.

"You are the true working man's friend, after all," he said. "I have come, governor, for my bit of land."

"Explain yourself," I replied. "To what bit of land do you refer?"

"Well, I mean my share of the division."

"But there is to be no division, neither of land nor anything else. The Constitution says nothing of division."

"No, but it does speak of equal opportunities; and how can I have equal opportunities with the Duke owding his thousands of acres and I having none?"

"You have equal opportunities with any Duke. For every penny that accrues to them by virtue of the mere ownership of land, they have to hand over to the

State. If you owned it, you would have to hand it over. The real owner, therefore, is the community, of which Dukes and yourself are equal citizens."

"Then you still allow Dukes to own land?"

"Certainly, if they like to. What does it matter to you who has possession of the land, provided that your share of the land values, or rent, is secured to you?"

"All right; hand me over my share of the rent."

"Not quite so quickly, if you please. You have equal rights with every other citizen, but also equal *duties*, and therefore have to pay taxes the same as everyone else. Your share of the rent is appropriated by the State as your share of the taxes."

"What good do I get out of that?"

"Every good that a well-organized State can secure you. You will receive every facility to produce wealth, and the fullest protection for what you do produce; together with all such conveniences, in the shape of roads, railways, facilities for education, etc., as are best provided by the State."

"But did you not say that we should all have equal access to land?"

"Oh! if it is merely access to land you want, you can be easily supplied. See here, the columns of the *Times* are already full of 'Lands to let.' So you can make your choice."

"And pay rent to them, I suppose, as before."

"No, you'll pay rent to the State; for whatever the ground value is, you would have to pay the State in any case, whether you were the nominal owner of it or not."

"Oh, that's fine talk. If there is no advantage in owning land, then why do not these people who don't want the land for their own use give it up altogether?"

"Because they have improvements upon it, which are theirs. Whatever is paid for the use of these will go to the owner, the rest goes to the State. If you want land without any improvements upon it, we have now plenty belonging to the State, which the former owners have relinquished rather than pay the tax for land which to them was useless. Among these lands are some very fine deer parks; that is, which formerly were deer parks. You can pick and choose where you like, and take as much of it as you please."

The applicant's face brightened. "And would it be mine, then?"

"Yours as long as you care to keep it. Your children's after you, or to whomsoever you may choose to transfer your rights of possession."

"And what have I to pay for it?"

"If there are no improvements on it belonging to former owners, nothing at all."

"And as much as I like?"

"As much as you care to take, subject to paying its annual value to the State."

"Oh, that's all right! I don't mind that; because, you see, I shall let it to tenants at a higher rate, and so make at last a comfortable living. It is right that the working man should at last have his turn."

"Stop, you are under a misapprehension," I said. "If you take land with such an intention it will be of little use to you, since all the rent would accrue to the State, leaving you only the trouble of collecting it, and the responsibilities connected therewith. It is for this very reason that its former possessors have relinquished it, because they did not care to incur risk and trouble for land for which they had no use."

"Yes, but I intend to put the tax on to my tenants in addition to the rent."

"That will help you but very little, as the tax is not a fixed sum, but twenty shillings in the pound on its annual rental value. If you can let the land at a higher value than it was let formerly, this of course would show that it is worth more, and you would still have to hand over to the State fully twenty shillings for every pound you receive."

The applicant pulled a long face. "What good is the land to me, then?"

"It gives you *free access to the opportunities of Nature;* and whatsoever you can make it yield is yours. Whatsoever others, your tenants, as you say, can make it yield is theirs. This is the spirit of the Constitution."

"So this is the kind of working men's friend you are, is it?"

"Yes, I am a *working men's* friend, but not the friend of those who wish to live by the labor of others," I replied. "You can have land in plenty, together with every opportunity and facility to labor, and full security of the fruits of your toil, sacred not only as against every fellow-citizen, but sacred even against the power of the State. It is yours exclusively and absolutely. You are free from all manner of taxation and all vexatious laws and restrictions that formerly used to hamper trade and industry. In short, you have now every inducement offered to become a *working* man, if you really wish to work."

My first visitor, being disappointed in his expectations, assumed a defiant attitude.

"But I don't wish to work. I have not been used to work for so long that I don't care to take to it now."

"Then I fear you will have to starve.

"I can beg, can't I?"

"Yes, you are at perfect liberty to do so; but you will be disappointed, I fear. So long as people were starving from necessity, and from no fault of their own, there were always kindly-disposed people—to the honor of mankind be it said—who were willing to assist their unfortunate brethren. But even then these kindly people endeavored to discriminate between the loafer and the necessitous. But as it was difficult to discriminate, the former often participated in what was intended for the honest poor. In the present state this difficulty no longer exists. Everybody knows that whosoever is willing to work can do so equally with everybody else. Under these circumstances no one will be disposed to support idleness and foster vice."

I delivered these words with deliberation and emphasis, and I could see that their meaning was not lost upon my applicant. He saw at once how difficult it would be for him to practice in future his former habits, and half-plaintively asked me to give him an order for the workhouse.

"There are none," I replied. "Those disgraceful institutions have been closed, and this blot on humanity and civilization has at last been wiped out."

"What! actually turned all the poor helpless folks out into the street?"

"Not so. Most of its occupants were there because they had no home to go to—old helpless folks or cripples. But now that their children and other relatives can earn good livings and have comfortable homes, they would no longer tolerate those dear to them branded as State paupers, but took them home—now no longer a burthen to them, but a source of

pleasure. Some few there were helpless and friendless, victims of former social conditions. To these we have granted pensions to enable them to live where they like and as they like—as citizens of the State, not as its paupers."

"Can't you grant me a pension?"

"Certainly not; you are not helpless."

"No, I am not helpless. You are right," he said defiantly. "If you have closed your workhouses you have not yet closed your prisons. I shall find ways and means to get there, and then you will have to keep me."

"If you do violence to the liberty or property of your fellow-citizens, of course it will be my duty to protect them; and if you cannot otherwise be prevailed upon to keep the peace and respect the equal rights of others, we shall have to restrain you. But you will not be cast into prison and fed at the expense of your fellow-men. You will find a nice clean cottage ready for you, comfortably furnished, with a garden plot and spade, or a workshop and such other tools by which you may prefer to earn your living, but isolated from the rest of the community, so that you cannot interfere with their liberties. You will be charged a certain rent for the house and tools supplied you, and you will have to pay, of course, the Ground Tax just the same as the others; in addition to which you would have to pay your share of the salaries of the Governor, Guardians, and Doctors, whom the State would have to employ to watch you and others like yourself."

"Doctors?" he asked.

"Yes, Doctors. We have replaced Lawyers by Doctors, because such cases as your own do not call for quibbles about precedents and abstractions, but

demand medical skill and judgment. Our Judges only decide whether there is any necessity to put people under restraint or not. In this they are guided by the fact whether the accused's being at large would interfere with the liberties of other citizens. For how long this restraint is to last is for medical men to decide, and not for lawyers."

"Then would you treat me as if I were insane?"

"What else is a man who has every opportunity offered to be free, independent, and happy, and yet prefers to work harder and be deprived of his liberty? For while under restraint you would have to work just the same for your living as if you were free, and, in addition to that, would have to pay the expenses of officials."

"But I tell you I am not going to work."

"In that case, of course you will starve while under restraint; and if you do not pay the rent of the cottage provided for you, you will be turned out of it and allowed to starve in the fields."

"What! and would you actually let me starve?"

"If you choose to, why not? I do not see in what manner I have a right to interfere with your liberties; and, truth to tell, if you would rather starve than be an honest man, I think it would be a blessing for mankind to be rid of such as you."

My visitor stared at me with profound astonishment, and for some time seemed as if he could not find speech. I watched him carefully, as if studying the effect of a drastic remedy on a patient. At last he said:

"I have, it seems, to work or to starve. The only choice you give me is to do either of these two things as a prisoner or as a free man. If prisoner, I have not only to work for myself, but also for your police-

troopers and doctors, and besides am stigmatized as a lunatic. Under these circumstances, it will pay me much better to become an honest man."

Here a deep sigh followed. "I can see through your plan," he continued. "Circumstances made a Loafer of me, and you now wish to employ the same means to make me honest again. Sir, I may be bad and wicked, but I am not a fool. Your methods are very drastic, but I think your plan is good. You shall hear of me again, but no more as a Loafer. I shall try and retrieve my lost dignity and manhood, and see whether I cannot be as good a citizen as I might have been had society but allowed me."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SHOPKEEPER.

THE next petitioner, from whom I learnt that he was a small shopkeeper in Cheapside, was much agitated, and bore a worried look.

"Sir," he said, in a trembling voice, "I hope you will relax your sternness a little in my case. I am hard hit. I am a hardworking, honest man, and have been all my life. After fighting the battle for life for so many weary years, I have at last succeeded in scraping enough together to buy a small piece of land and build a house on it. What am I to do now?"

"Why, keep it, good sir, and make the best of it."

My answer seemed to electrify the man into life again.

"Then you are not going to take it from me?" he inquired eagerly.

"Certainly not. I could not if I would. The Constitution would not allow me."

"But I understood that you were to confiscate all the land."

"You mean, perhaps, *nationalize?*"

"Well, is not that the same thing?"

"No, not by a long way. To confiscate means to take away. But the object of the Constitution is not to *take* the land from the people, but to open it up to them, since without access to it they cannot live—save, of course, by permission, and on the terms of those who can debar them from it."

"And—and—has everybody a right to it now?"

"Yes; everybody has an equal right with yourself to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and therefore to the *means of life*, that is, the land and the elements of Nature."

"Then anybody might come and turn me off the land—out of my home?"

"Oh, no. No one can do that so long as you care to stay. You are only expected to share with the others the advantages that accrue to you from the exclusive possession of that particular spot; and in return, all the other people have to share with you whatever similar advantages they may enjoy by monopolizing portions of the country."

"And how are you going to adjust what I am to give and what I am to receive in return?"

"Very easily. Whatever the rental value of your plot of land may be, is the measure of the advantages you enjoy to the exclusion of all others. Therefore you will be required to hand over to the State a sum equal thereto. That is, you will pay a tax of twenty shillings in the pound on the *unimproved value* of your land. Others will do the same, and thus provide the funds necessary for public purposes. Your returns will consist in the enjoyment of those conveniences which the money will provide."

"If you tax my land to its full value, is it not the same as if you took it away?"

"Certainly not. You can still use it the same as before. But if I took it away you could not."

"But is not its value gone?"

"Surely not its utility. You can live on it, trade on it, and grow on it whatever it could yield, as before. These values it will still possess undiminished, and

yours will be the exclusive right to enjoy them so long as you pay the tax—or rent."

He shook his head. "You leave me in possession of the land, certainly, but you tax me, and that heavily."

"No more than what you receive in return. And not so much, I think, as you paid formerly for less. You are a business man. Let me put a few common-sense questions to you. Suppose you sold goods to a customer of yours and sent them home by another man's cart, would you claim the money for the cartage as well as for the goods?"

"The cartage money would go, of course, to the man to whom the cart belongs?"

"Twenty shillings in the pound?"

"Of course."

"That is precisely your case. If you withhold portions of the country, with all its natural advantages, from your fellow-citizens, you have to pay to them for the privilege; while whatever you create on the land by your toil is yours. Others have to do the same. Those who would contribute less must be content with monopolizing less. Everybody is treated alike, and each has to pay, not according to what he possesses, but *according to value received.*"

"I do not dispute the correctness or even the justice of your principles," he said with a sigh, "but it falls heavily on me. You see, sir, I have bought my land with honest, hard-earned money, and now am as good as losing it—every penny."

"What is the value of your land?"

"I paid for it £240. It is assessed now at an annual value of £10.

"Then your taxes will amount to £10. Have you not paid as much before?"

"No, certainly not. My tax did not amount to more than nine shillings."

"Yes, the land tax. But I mean altogether, taxes and rates. Surely you have paid as much before?"

"Oh, altogether, I have paid, let me see—inhabited house duty, 10s.; property tax I believe as much; and rates and poor law, £15; that is about £16."

"And on your shop—is that your own too?"

"I have built it, but it's mine only for another eighty years."

"What rates and taxes did you pay for that?"

"About £60. It is assessed at £300 per annum."

"Income-tax?"

"That's not much, something like £6."

"Stamp duties on checks and receipts?"

"Say two shillings a week."

"Customs duties on tea, coffee, currants, etc."

"Yes, I dare say it comes to something like £4 a year, although I neither smoke nor drink. But I have six children, and they make up for it in tea and currants."

"Let us see now. You have paid altogether in rates and taxes something like £91, of which burden you are now entirely relieved. You are asked to pay instead £10 on your land only. Are you really so hardly done by?"

"If you put it that way, perhaps not."

"And for these ten pounds," I continued, "the community puts at your disposal postal and telegraph service, roads, railways, protection of life, liberty, and property; education for your children, and many other conveniences. Is that so great a hardship?"

"These are very fine promises, truly; but if you are going to reduce my taxes from £91 to £10, as you say,

where is the money to come from to carry them out?"

"You say your shop in Cheapside is not on your own land. What is the ground rent of that?"

"I pay £500 in ground rent; of course, besides my shop, there are offices which I sublet."

"Then you see these £500 which you formerly paid into private pockets will now go into the State coffers, as the price of 'natural opportunities withheld.' This will more than compensate the State for the reduction of taxes made to you and your fellow-tenants. The annual value of ground rents amounts to more than £200,000,000, which is far above the total expenditure; that for last year was only £185,000,000. But on this we shall be able to economize a good deal—so that the rent-tax will be sufficient for both imperial and local needs—and spend it more usefully. What was spent on poor law, police, prisons, hereditary pensions to people who had done nothing to earn them, sinecures, and gewgaws, will now be devoted to more useful purposes. We shall also save a great deal by abolishing custom houses and by the simplification of taxation, which will enable us to do away with much unnecessary machinery; or, at any rate, employ it more profitably. In short, instead of hampering trade and industry, we shall try to help it on."

"But for all that you have made a poorer man of me. Yesterday I could have sold my house and land for £1000."

"You can still sell your house!"

"Yes, but I would get nothing for the land."

"No, but you could buy another block for the same price."

"So—I—could," he muttered with amazement, as if this truth had only just dawned upon him.

"And your children won't have to toil and scrape for years before they will be allowed to have a home in their native land."

"That's enough, sir!" he exclaimed. "I was a blockhead to have given you all this trouble for nothing. What a fool! Actually wanted to keep up land monopoly because it has made my battle in life hard; and never to think that if kept up it would make it as hard for my children. Good-day, sir. I am more than satisfied with the change."

CHAPTER V.

A SOCIALIST.

My conversation with the shopkeeper seemed to have a salutary effect on a good many besides himself; for as he left a large number of those who were waiting their turn left with him, evidently pleased and well satisfied with what they had heard.

As they left one of the crowd rushed eagerly forward. He was excited, but with that kind of excitement which honest men feel when they think wrong has been done to others. He was a rather lean man, well-dressed, with high forehead, and very intelligent looking.

"It is plain that you have given every satisfaction to the middle class, and have earned the gratitude of the whole bourgeoisie," he said, with a bitter sneer. "They are to have their taxes reduced, railways and telegraphs provided, so that they can increase their profits, and have their children educated for nothing; and the working men are to be left to the mercies of the capitalist, with not even a workhouse to go to, lest the bourgeoisie might have to be taxed. Is this your idea of equal rights and equal liberties?"

For this kind of opposition I was scarcely prepared. But there was no mistaking the sincerity of the man, nor his honesty of purpose. To tell him that he was mistaken in thus interpreting my actions, and bid him have patience, that all would come right in the end,

and so forth, was clearly out of question. The man was not to be pacified unless he could be satisfied first. And as it was my aim to enlist the sympathies of the people for my reforms, and to avoid as much as possible unnecessary friction, I said, after some moments of reflection:

"I am only enforcing the Constitution, for which, among others, you yourself have voted. If I put a wrong construction on it I sin in ignorance, and shall be thankful to you for putting me right."

This mollified him somewhat, and I could not help thinking at the moment how wrong it was for people who should pull together, to fall out with each other on account of difference of opinion as to the best methods of attaining their common end.

"What are my particular errors of omission or commission?" I asked.

"In the first place you have established no national workshops."

"On the contrary," I interposed, "the whole country is now one large national workshop, in which each can work to his heart's content; where, when, and how he likes." But, heedless of my interruption, he continued:

"You have made no laws to restrict the powers of the capitalist, to limit the hours of labor, the rate of wages, or of interest."

"But such laws would be against the spirit of the Constitution—our Democratic Constitution — which says that every citizen shall have perfect liberty, limited only by the like liberties of his fellow-citizens. If I should tell a man how many hours he is to work, or what he is to give in exchange for certain services, would this not be a flagrant interference with his per-

sonal liberties? Besides, such legislation is absolutely mischievous, and could only result in the re-establishment of class rule and class legislation, from the evils of which we are just now trying to escape."

"Not only have you omitted doing all these things," he continued, again disregarding my answer, as if solely intent on his own thoughts, "but you have actually abolished what few taxes the capitalists had to pay—the Income and Property Tax, Probate duties, etc., thus allowing the wealthy to escape scot free."

"But surely you do not wish to abolish the well-to-do? I always was under the impression that you objected to poverty, and that the object of good government was to extirpate *this*, root and branch."

"Oh, certainly, if you put it that way! But how do you set about it?"

"By encouraging industry, in the first place, thrift in the second. Surely, it is good that the nation should possess as much as possible of all the good things which add to its comfort. Can it be that you regard wealthy citizens as an evil, and therefore wish to put a tax on them?"

"Come, sir, you evade the question. Is it not a fact that the few have piled up their millions at the expense of the many? And if they are not checked by taxation, what is to stop them from continuing the same thing?"

"They *are checked* from getting what belongs to others, since all have now equal opportunities; but there is no check on anyone to prevent him from producing wealth, or from accumulating it, if he so choose. A person should not be fined for building a house or planting a tree; nor should a premium be offered for indolence or improvidence."

"Fined for building a house or planting a tree? You speak in enigmas."

"Not at all. Every tax levied on industry is of the nature of a fine; that is, even if not intended as such, has the same effect as a fine. A tax on dogs tends to diminish their number. Or, supposing it were thought there were too many bachelors, then a bachelor's tax, if high enough, would encourage matrimony. In the one case you practically fine a man for keeping a dog; in the other for not getting married."

"Well, if dogs and bachelors are objectionable, is it not right to tax them?"

"Yes; and if wealth were objectionable we might tax that, too. But my object is to exterminate poverty, and not wealth."

"That's all very well. But if one man were not allowed to accumulate more than a certain amount, the remainder would be distributed among the others."

"How do you know there would be any remainder? Suppose we did determine that a man should not own more than a certain amount of wealth; is it not possbile that he would waste more, or else stop production when he has reached his limit?"

"Well, I don't know. You are trying to theorize. This fact, however, remains, that people with money grind down the poor, and while idlers roll in wealth many workers are starving."

"That *was* a fact; and did but indicate that as a remedy for such a deplorable state of things we should discourage idleness and encourage the worker."

My Socialist visitor remained silent, and so I continued:

"It is for this reason that I spoke to the first applicant, whom you call a working man, as I did. He was

not a worker by his own confession, although I hope he is one now. You should not fall into the error of calling every poor man a worker and every rich man an idler. You can find both workers and idlers in all classes."

"Then why not treat them all alike?"

"That is precisely what I am directed to do by our Constitution. There are now equal opportunities to all and favors to none. Whosoever likes to work is now free to do so, and may enjoy the full fruits of his labor. And if any would not work, neither should he eat, be his name Jack or Sir John."

"Then, after all your fine promises, you simply mean to pursue the 'let-it-alone' policy?"

"If by 'let-it-alone policy' you mean that each person is to be allowed to employ himself and enjoy himself as he or she may think fit, without anyone having the right of interference with their liberties, then 'Yes!' that is indeed the spirit of that principle for which you and the whole Democracy have been fighting for years past."

"Then you mean to allow the capitalist to grind down the workers without affording the latter the protection of the law?"

"I merely substitute freedom for club rule. Under such conditions everybody can look after himself. You wish to rule by whims and fancies; I carry out principles."

"Not by whims and fancies, but by *law*."

"What you call *Laws* are but whims and fancies of people. *Laws* are not, and cannot, be made by man, but are as old as the universe itself. All man has to do is to discover them—I mean, of course, the Laws of Nature; but these you ignore entirely, and think

that by writing your own opinions—your whims and fancies—on parchment, you have manufactured a 'Law.' If such enactment fails in its intended purpose, you set about amending it; then amend the amendment, and so keep on tinkering from year's end to year's end—call it wisdom, statesmanship, legislation. And when anyone points out to you that your enactments run counter to every natural law, then you exclaim 'Theory, theory!' "

"You are simply a slave to principle."

"Yes, I confess my guilt on that head. I certainly have greater faith in the principles of Nature than in the opinions and haphazard guesses of man. Men have now been tinkering at legislation these many centuries, and with what result you know. Under these circumstances, do you not think it high time to give Nature a trial, were it only to demonstrate the worthlessness of her laws compared with human wisdom?"

There was no reply to this, and so I continued in a more conciliatory tone:

"If this principle, upon which you and I and all schools of political thought are agreed, is a true one, let us have faith in it, and follow out its dictates to the letter. For if the principle is wrong, or if principles are not to be relied on at all, then pray by what can we be guided? Would you have us return to Party Government, with its appeals to ignorance, religious prejudices, and racial animosities, without either reason or principle? Or re-establish the rule of might?"

My visitor was not yet convinced. "That is all very well in theory. I commend your abolition of the land capitalist; but that in itself will be useless, unless you at the same time abolish all other capitalists and establish a system of State-directed production and distribution."

I glanced at the people behind him whom, up till now, I had somehow regarded as a deputation of workmen on whose behalf he was pleading. But on closer examination I saw, to my surprise, that all those present were well dressed, and betrayed none of the characteristics of workmen. I called my visitor's attention to this fact, and he at once replied that he had not come with *those* people, but had headed a large number of unemployed, and that he could not explain how it was that they had all left. "These gentlemen," he added, "probably came to thank you for your partiality toward them;" this with another sneer.

An idea struck me. I saw plainly that an object lesson would be far more convincing to this man than abstract arguments; and I could read in the looks of those present that they came for other purposes than to express any gratitude toward me. So I said:

"Sir, you are right; we must not allow the laborers to be ground down, if they are really in that helpless condition you represent. If they cannot take care of themselves, we—that is, you and I—will look after them, and nurse them as we would helpless babies. To be honest with you, I myself do not think that your fears are well grounded. I think that in a fair and open field every true working man is able to hold his own, and look after himself. If I am mistaken in this, then I am on your side; for already have I made provision for the maimed and helpless. But first let us see what this influential deputation have come for; perhaps it may throw some side-light on the points which you have raised. So please remain where you are, and listen to their representations."

CHAPTER VI.

DEPUTATION OF RAILWAY DIRECTORS.

My surmises were correct, and my Socialist opponent had not long to wait before he could see that these people had not come to thank me for anything I had done; but rather to urge upon me the adoption of the same measure as he himself advocated—viz., to tax Capital rather than Land.

They were boisterous, but not very self-confident, and gave me the impression that they intended to overawe and frighten me into submission.

Their spokesman, a rather portly gentleman, commenced in an imperious tone:

"We have come to demand the instant repeal of these disastrous proclamations which are working the ruin of the country. We shall not submit to——

Here I interposed, reminding him that I represented the Sovereign People, and that I must insist on more respectful language. That while they were free to place before me their complaints, and to expect redress if they could make out a good case, they were not allowed to refuse obedience to the law as it stood.

"If the law is bad," I continued, "you are free to agitate for its repeal; but while it is in force it must be obeyed. You know this doctrine, since you have preached it often enough yourselves. Now you may proceed. What is it you have to say?"

"We have to inform you, then, that since your proc-

lamation has been issued the country has been ruined. Millions of capital have been destroyed, and unless there is a speedy repeal of this in—er—this—er—this disastrous law, bankruptcy is staring the nation in the face."

I was not much alarmed by the statement; for, though there were many of them, they were neither the whole nation nor representatives of the whole nation. So I said calmly:

"Will you please state who you are, and what interests you represent? Clearly you cannot mean the whole nation, since many who have been here before you have expressed their satisfaction with the new administration."

"Yes," replied the spokeman; "those whom you have benefited by plundering us."

I again sternly rebuked the speaker, and warned him against again using such disrespectful language. He then explained that those present were directors of the several railway companies, and that since this new proclamation their companies had been utterly ruined. This was serious news; railways are important industrial undertakings, and I had no intention of hampering their usefulness. I said as much, which seemed to give reassurance and hope to the deputation. "Please explain to me in what manner this change has affected you," I continued.

"It has affected us in a manner," said the speaker, "which you could not have foreseen; which only shows how dangerous it is to experiment with old-established institutions. In the first place, you have taxed away all the revenue we have derived from our land, and have taxed in addition all the land over which the lines are running."

"But I have remitted all your other taxes," I said, "and in that respect have placed you on an equality with every other industrial undertaking."

"Yes, yes; but, as I told you, you do not yet understand all the effects which this has had. Our employees demand exorbitant wages, which would not leave a single penny profits."

"Then don't pay the wages, if they are exorbitant."

"But what are we to do? We cannot get enough men as it is, and if we stopped working the lines, how could we afford to pay the tremendous Land Tax? In less than a month or so this would absorb all our rolling stock and buildings; while, thanks to your administration, the value of the land, for which we have paid so dearly, is gone already."

"But if your employees are so extortionate, why not replace them by recruiting from the army of unemployed?"

The speaker waxed indignant, and there was great murmuring among the deputation.

"You are absolutely ignorant of the condition the country is in, and therefore unfit for the position you occupy. Unemployed, indeed, when I tell you that we are unable to get sufficient hands to cope with the tremendous traffic, which has increased to nearly double its amount, and not a man to be had for love or money! We are left entirely to the mercy of our employees."

"That explains why the mass of unemployed have left you. They have evidently learnt already to stand on their own legs, and mean to dispense with their nurses," I whispered to the Socialist. And turning to the speaker, I said aloud:

"But surely the country cannot then be in such a

disastrous state as you represented. You really confuse me."

Here one of the deputation stepped forward, a man with a fine head, closely shaven face, and frank and noble countenance. His demeanor was deferential and polite, in pleasing contrast to the angry looks of the majority.

"I think I can explain matters to you, sir, and perhaps also to my fellow-Directors, who I think take a somewhat one-sided view of the matter. Under the circumstances this is perhaps natural. Since you have opened the racecourse, allowing everybody to compete on equal terms, those who formerly enjoyed exclusive privileges do not find it so easy to get their accustomed swag. We find that others can run faster than ourselves, and get the prizes. For myself I will not complain, but throw off the old traditions which now are hampering me, and try again my strength under the new conditions."

"Instead of explaining, you only puzzle me more and more."

"I will be plain then. You have opened up the natural opportunities to the people, and now everyone is able to make the best of his abilities. At first I too considered your proposals sheer madness, because I thought that, even if you did open up the land, everybody would not be fit to start farming. I don't know why, but the idea of land reform always suggested to me that it meant everybody should be a farmer. But I now see that that is neither necessary nor even possible. You have certainly taught us that railway dividends come as much from land as do potatoes. The farmers, who are now making good profits, employ builders to improve their habitations, buy carpets,

furniture, clothing, and all manner of other conveniences. The manufacturers and tradespeople are all busy, and, of course, earning good money. These too try to improve their conditions. Most of them were really out at elbow, barely having been able to provide themselves with the merest necessities of life. But now that they are in a position to do so everybody is buying and sending out orders on one hand, and supplying others with such articles as they themselves produce or deal in. This gave a sudden and great impetus to all the trades, and, of course, also to the railways. The army of unemployed vanished as if by magic. Under these conditions everybody naturally demands for his services an equal counter-service. The laborer has no longer to beg for employment, and unless people are willing to pay him what he thinks his labor is worth, he refuses to part with it. I cannot blame him, for we do the same; we have raised our rates on the railways, and people pay cheerfully."

"Yes; but have we anything of it?" asked the former speaker. "Does it not all go away again in wages or in taxes?"

"It does, certainly. Those who work the railways get the benefit, leaving to us just about enough to recoup us for the wear and tear of rolling plant, and such return as would be about an equitable return for the rent of our buildings and other plant."

The deputation got a little noisy, each of them attempting to remonstrate at the same time with the last speaker for his frankness, for which they called him a Judas and other coarse names.

I again interfered, and after some difficulty succeeded in restoring quiet. Turning to the first speaker, I said:

"This is a somewhat different picture to what you drew, and is most satisfactory and gratifying. Instead of having ruined the nation, I find that the nation is prosperous; and I fail to see what you have come to complain about. If the wages of all those engaged in railway work are higher, surely you, as the managers of the concern, must share in the general prosperity. For if each man is in a position to put his own price on his labor, you, as the most important officials, must be able to command good salaries for your services. I mean your wages of superintendence."

The man whom I addressed bit his lip and was silent, as were the rest, excepting the gentleman who made the former frank statement.

"If you will pardon me, sir, for saying so," he said, "I think my friend was right when he said you were ignorant on many points of railway management. We, as Directors, have nothing to do with the management or superintendence of railway work proper. Our business is, or I should rather say was, to receive the balance-sheet and the earnings of the men and to declare dividends. Of course, there are still earnings, and still dividends to be declared; but now a rent collector could perform the work for us."

"Well, and is that so bad? I should say your rents for buildings, and so on, should be more secure now than formerly; and considering that houses and rolling-stock represent labor, and that labor is well paid, their value, I should think, would be enhanced."

"It is. But railway carriages and buildings don't last for ever, as does the land. Nor was our chief revenue derived from this source. We had a profit on every man we employed; this is now gone. And as population increased and trade improved, so the value of

our lands improved. This is now gone too. Our shares formerly went up, whether our carriages and buildings were new or old. Now they go down every day, as our plant depreciates. And if we wanted to keep our plant in the same condition, we could draw no dividends at all, since all we receive would be absorbed for depreciation, to repair or replace the old stock."

"Would you please explain this point a little more clearly," I said.

"Certainly. Supposing you built a house, a carriage, or an engine. This would not last forever."

"Of course not."

"Well, then, supposing an engine to last for twenty years, then you would not pay for an engine that has been in work ten years the same price as if it were new. And if you lent that engine on hire, you could not get more for its use than just what would replace another engine of the same kind by the time it is used up, since everybody is in a position to command whatever he needs, and is unwilling to pay usury. The same applies, of course, to our plant and rolling stock. If we would withdraw the money which we earn for its use, the carriages, engines, etc., would depreciate, and would ultimately be all used up. And if we keep things in repair, replacing old stock by new, we could draw no dividends at all."

"But then your plant and stock are left you."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the first speaker. "And you would have us provide the public with convenience for nothing?"

"But you do not provide it for nothing, if they enable you to replace what they consume. *Would you have more in return than what you give?*"

"Oh! it is no good arguing with him," they said;

"we had better stop traffic altogether, and see then whether the people will stand it."

"I will answer for that," I said, rising from my seat. "The plant is yours, and you can do with it whatever you please, gentlemen. The land is yours also, so long as you choose to keep it, *and pay the rent for it to the State*. If you do not care to keep it you are allowed to pick up your rails and sleepers and do with them as you please; and the State would have to provide new railway lines for the people."

This deliverance put an end to their bluster. They were terror-stricken. And I considered the moment opportune to make them a proposal, which I thought would be of advantage to the State and convenient to themselves. I said:

"In a country of such general prosperity, where penniless and ignorant people are in a position to earn comfortable livings, men like yourselves, who have education, abilities, and substance to start with, should not be in despair. Abilities you undoubtedly possess, but hitherto you have wasted them on unholy objects —that is, in finding out ways and means how to make profit at the expense of your fellow-men. I do not blame you for having done so, nor do I reproach you. You were the creatures of circumstances, as were the rest of us. Now a new order has set in. And I doubt not but that your abilities will soon find outlets in more legitimate, and perhaps even more profitable channels. You may not care to continue under the new conditions the worries incidental to company management, and could employ, perhaps, your wealth in other ways more congenial to your tastes under the altered circumstances. If so, the State is willing to relieve you of all your responsibilities, and to pay you for

every rail, nail, brick, or sleeper its full price at present valuation."

In less than five minutes they agreed to my proposals, and I gave instructions to have the plant surveyed and appraised.

Thus the highroads of the country became the property of the nation by voluntary surrender.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIRECTORS OF THE NEW RIVER COMPANY.

THINGS happen strangely and oddly in dreams, and yet everything seems perfectly natural. The Directors of the Railway Company had not left my presence, nor do I remember anyone having entered the room while they were there. But, notwithstanding this, I had before me another deputation. The men were the same, but not the interest—or concern, rather—which they represented. This time it was on behalf of the New River Company that one of their number addressed me. Fixing his eyes upon me, he said:

"I hear that you are very fond of facts, and that you will not believe anything that cannot be demonstrated to you. Here, then, are some hard facts for you to digest." And he held up to me two copies of Stock Exchange quotations. "Look on this picture, and on that."

I did so, and read in one "New River Company, £138,000." And in the other "New River Company, £13 10s.; no business done." I also noticed great reductions in other stock, though not to the same extent; and opposite many of the companies there were either no quotations at all or the legend "In Liquidation."

"Are you convinced now that we are putting facts before you?" he asked.

"I am; and most surprising facts they are," I replied.

"Most surprising!" echoed the Socialist.

"Within the last few months," continued the spokesman, "over five hundred thousand million pounds' worth of capital has been destroyed."

The allusion to the last few months astonished me more than the amount of capital destroyed. "Dear me!" I exclaimed; "have I been in office so long? How the time does fly!"

"Over half a million millions of pounds, if a penny," he continued. "I am prepared to make good my statement."

"Oh, I take your word for the amount," I said smilingly. "But would you be good enough to tell me what kind of 'capital' has been destroyed, and in what manner?"

"If you will come with me to my office I will show you a whole strong-room full of what was once most valuable 'stock,' but which is now so much waste paper —or very nearly so."

"Dear me! have the moths got into them, or mice, or rats?"

"Neither of these, but the blight and canker of your cursed government," he said, with ill-suppressed anger.

"I fail to see how I could have done anything to spoil goods locked up in your strong-room."

He gazed at me with angry amazement. "I verily believe," he said, after a while, "that you are utterly ignorant of what 'stock' means."

"Not at all," I said. "I myself keep oxen, horses, pigs, poultry. But these should be safe, one would think, locked up in strong-rooms."

"I am not speaking of live stock," he exclaimed indignantly, "but of *shares*. Have I not shown you

that the shares of the New River Company alone have come down from over a hundred thousand pounds to a paltry £13 10s., and no buyers even at that?"

"Perhaps they are not worth more," I suggested.

"No; not while you are at the helm of State, and allow us to be plundered in this shameful and outrageous fashion. For that, sir, is the cause of this tremendous fall, that we are being plundered, and that by your authority."

"Plundered!" I said. "No; that I will not allow. I will stop that at once." And I rang the bell sharply, and ordered the Commissioner of Police to be sent. No sooner had I said so than that functionary stood before me.

"Have I not given strict orders," I thundered, "that the liberty and property of every citizen should be protected, and that without any distinction whatever? How is it that these gentlemen here have to complain of having been plundered of several millions?"

But the Commissioner of Police neither quaked nor trembled at my thundering; and as I looked at him more closely he turned out to be no other than my friend Verinder, who, with the familiar twinkle in his eye, said:

"Your instructions have been carried out to the letter, and that is just the complaint of these gentlemen. What they have been 'plundered' of is the right to plunder others. I believe the figures to be right, for I always thought theirs was a lucrative business."

"But they also speak of destruction of capital."

"Nothing of the kind, I assure you. They are still in possession of all they had—their works, pumps, pipes, and taps. Their 'shares' or 'stock' are as fresh and crisp as ever, and I doubt not that with proper

care and in strong-rooms they will keep so for many years."

"But you have made waste paper of them," exclaimed the spokesman of the deputation. Whereupon Police Commissioner Verinder explained as follows:

"These gentlemen were lords of the clouds; that is, the water that was showered down by our Heavenly Father upon the just and unjust alike was claimed by them as their exclusive property. They erected large filters and pumps, laid down pipes in all directions, and supplied the water to the inhabitants at so much per gallon. The inhabitants complained, demanded a reduction in price, and threatened to take possession of their works."

"And have they done so?" I asked.

"No, but they have done *worse*; that is, as far as these gentlemen are concerned. They have left them their works and pipes, and have erected a new plant, belonging to the community; and now, of course, the people will no longer buy their water at a higher rate than that at which they can be supplied by the parish pumps."

"You do not give all the facts," interrupted the complainant. "Nor do you mention that you acted as an agitator against our interests."

"Oh, if you wish me to go into details I will do so with pleasure," replied the acute Police Commissioner. "There was, as I said, a perfect revolution. The people wanted to take possession of the waterworks, and pay the present owners at valuation. I drew a cordon of police around the works to protect the property of the company. I then explained to the people that they had no right to force people to surrender

aught against their will, nor fix the price of their service, any more than the company could force people to work for them at *their* price. But I advised them, certainly, that if they were dissatisfied with the company's prices they could erect a plant of their own. They decided to do so, and were about to tap the river, when the directors of the company came to me with a parchment, claiming the sole right to the whole river. Now, sir, your proclamation was that no one should be disturbed in his present possessions, and I again promised the company full protection, but pointed out that, *inasmuch as the river itself is a natural opportunity*, if they wished to have exclusive possession of it, they would have to pay for the privilege."

"And we made a liberal offer."

"You did; but it did not come up to the liberality of the Constitution, which demands twenty shillings in the pound on the full value of all natural advantages. I said to them that so long as everybody can have free access, and there is water enough for all, the rent or tax would be *nil*, since in that case there would be no monopoly. But if there should be competition for the water, the tax would be the full value which this competition would give it. They refused to pay the tax, and so the local authority tapped the river. Under these circumstances—there being no monopoly—of course there is no rent for either party. Nor need I say that the company is not paying now any other taxes, since they have all been abolished, excepting only, of course, the ground rent for land occupied by their buildings, reservoirs, etc."

"And no capital has been destroyed?"

"None whatever. What these people call 'capital'

was a certificate which gave them the right to levy a tribute from the citizens of the district, before they allowed them to quench their thirst or have a bath. The enormous value of their 'shares' or 'scrip' only shows the extent to which this blackmailing has been carried on. Now that people have access to the natural opportunities, they no longer pay for what they can get for nothing. The company are still supplying a large area, and that because they have lowered their rates to those charged by the corporation, whereupon the latter desisted from extending the new pipes. These rates are just sufficient to pay for filtration and distribution, and the expenses connected therewith."

"That is to say," I remarked, "that, whereas they were formerly water-*lords*, they now are water-*carriers*."

"Precisely. And instead of having taken any capital from them, we have actually removed all former taxes —much to their regret. They volunteered to treble their income tax, and to have their *machinery* rated to any extent the people liked, provided they were left in possession of the river. This was the 'liberal' offer referred to. But by this time the people saw the cat, and——"

"Enough, sir," I said. And, turning toward the deputation, I added:

"Your petition is dismissed. You are free to pump water from the river, and sell it at whatever price you can get for it. But I cannot prevent other people from doing the same thing, since I cannot deny them access to the opportunities of Nature, nor can I force them to pay you more for your services than they think these are worth. But if you don't care to carry on the business of water-carriers under these new con-

ditions, I offer to buy your plant on behalf of the inhabitants of the district at present valuations. Shall we say it is a bargain?"

And a bargain it was, for after a very brief consultation among themselves I received the following answer:

"We have no other option but to accept."

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER CHAT WITH THE SOCIALIST.

"WONDERFUL! You must be a magician," exclaimed the Socialist, as soon as the last deputation withdrew.

"I can hardly believe that these people have surrendered their capital so meekly otherwise than under the influence of some magic. Seriously, have you hypnotized them?"

"It would almost seem so; but the only magic I have made use of is the application of natural principles in the regulation of the relations between man and man."

"That hardly explains why such a selfish set of people as most capitalists are should surrender the power they had of robbing the community of workers."

"Because they *are* selfish, and because, having no longer a profitable monopoly, they do not care to provide people with water. You speak of them as 'capitalists.' In a sense, they were capitalists; but how much do you think their *real capital* amounted to?"

"Millions. Many millions. They were kings—water kings."

I smiled, and handed him the estimate I had just received from the surveyor, which gave the total of the waterworks at £36,582. He looked at me in amazement.

"This," I said, "is the full value of their plant, buildings, engines, pipes, and meters, all included. For land including river, you see, we need not pay, because its value—its *market value*, understand—is gone."

"And what has become of the rest of their capital?" he asked.

"The rest you can get at the price of waste paper, since it is nothing else, and never was anything else. For that which you still call 'capital' consisted of nothing but parchments and papers—the bogies of which you and your school were so terribly afraid."

"But these shares represented capital?"

"Very little indeed; and so far as shares represented real capital—that is, wealth in some form or other—it was harmless. But such shares as those of the water company, or the title-deeds of land, represented no *existing* wealth at all, but wealth to be produced in the future. That is, the holders of such deeds had *a lien on future production*."

"I do not quite follow your meaning."

"I will explain, then. Supposing I owned yon narrow footpath leading down to the river or lake, and that this enabled me to levy a toll on every passer-by before I allowed him to quench his thirst. You, seeing I am doing a profitable business, propose to buy me out. I agree to sell—but what? Not the toll I have already collected, but the *opportunity of levying toll in the future*. I speak to you thus: My revenue from this river is £100 annually; but the city is growing, and this the only source of water for miles. As people increase, so my toll-money must increase. Hence I want you to pay down equal to what I think I might be able to collect in the next twenty-seven or thirty years; or, in round figures, I require £2700 for

'my property'! This at once constitutes me a 'capitalist' of that amount; yet the only real capital, that is 'wealth' in the shape of human labor, may consist in a gate to lock out the people. In the course of events natural opportunities are declared common property, and the revenue derived from them goes to the State. What offer would you then make me for my property?"

"None at all; excepting, perhaps, a few shillings for your wooden gate," he said laughingly.

"Precisely. And that explains why the shares of the water company have fallen from £138,000 to £13 10s. You know now what has become of their other capital. In other words, it had no existence except on paper. And once the system which has sanctioned blackmailing is abolished, and the toll-gates which debarred mankind from Nature are pulled down, these papers are powerless, and require no further Act of Parliament to make them harmless. You will clearly understand, of course, that by *real capital* I mean something that is due to human exeriton—*accumulated labor;* that is, wealth to which its rightful owner is entitled by virtue of his exertion."

"Well, all wealth is due to labor, for that matter."

"No, it is not. This is a great and fundamental error on your part. So far from this being true, labor has the smallest share in the production of wealth."

"What?" he asked in surprise, "wealth not due entirely to labor, when you yourself admit that capital itself is only accumulated labor?"

"Oh, bother capital! It is a perfect Mrs. Harris in Political Economy. The two factors in the production of wealth are *labor* and the *forces or raw products of*

Nature. Without the latter the former is absolutely impotent. Without the former but little is to be had. These two factors then—*Nature* and *human labor*—co-operate everywhere, though in variable proportion in different localities, in the production of these commodities men require. These commodities you may call wealth, or capital, or whatever else you please. Where Nature co-operates more freely, men are well off. Where Nature's share is less, men are worse off. But in most cases the greater part is done by Nature. Woe betide the people who are so situated that labor has to do the greater part of the work."

"Do you know such a place?"

"Yes. Aden, for instance, which is lying in a desert. Their very firewood has to be fetched in small bundles on camels from a distance; and their drink-water has to be distilled from sea water, and is sold by hawkers from house to house as milk is in our streets."

"But how does that bear on our question?"

"It has an important bearing on it. You and many others were always clamoring for 'the fruits of your labor.' "

"Of course; and so we are still."

"Well, if you had 'the fruits of your labor' only, you would be worse off than the people in Aden; for these folks have at least the sea-water for nothing. What you should have asked for is *free access to Nature* and an *equal share in the bounties of Nature.* The fruit of your toil would then be yours as a matter of course, since then no one could enslave you."

"And you think you have effected this with the single tax?"

"Certainly. For whatever is due to Nature now goes to the community, and the expenditure of the

revenue thus derived benefits all alike. And all having an equal interest in the spending, care is taken that it is usefully employed. All being thus placed on an equality as regards the opportunities of production, no one can lord it over the other. In other words, now a truly *free contract* between buyer and seller, employer and employee, is possible."

"But still there will be some more skillful than others, and thus produce more."

"Yes; and these are the very men we wish to encourage, to be emulated by the others. What we have achieved by the single tax is this: The road is now open to all, and everyone can run as fast as he pleases. The fastest runner will get the highest prize, but no longer at the expense of those less gifted. Nor can he, by being the fastest runner, prevent others from reaching the same goal, though perhaps a little later. He can shut no gate, and erect no barriers. The road is to remain open to all and forever. There is a prize for everyone in the race, and the magnitude of the prize is determined by everyone for himself. Blanks there are for those only who are too lazy to take part in the race."

"Answer me another question. Why is it that you have not taxed the Water Company for the use of the river? For, according to your view, this is a natural opportunity."

"It is. But we only charge for natural opportunities that are monopolized. These people do not now monopolize the water, but supply it to whosoever wants it. They simply act as *carriers*, and anybody else can do the same. If we charged them for the water, would we not tax those who use it?"

"Yes. And since the water is used by a portion of

the nation only, whereas it belongs to the whole, should not those who enjoy it pay for it?"

"Oh, that is what you mean. There you are right. But then the people do pay for that already; since whatever advantage there is in being near a river attaches to the value of the ground occupied."

"I hardly see your point."

"And yet it is plain enough. Suppose there are two blocks of land in every respect alike, save that the one is near the river, whereas to the other water has to be conveyed by some means. Say now that this would mean an annual expense of £5. Would you not, in that case, esteem the former block of land worth by so much more than the latter?"

"That is my point."

"So that you would agree to take the latter block at £5 less rent only?"

"Yes."

"But the water being supplied, it will now be of equal value. So that if we charged for water in outlying districts the ground rent would be by so much less. But both water and ground rents belonging to the State, there is no need for separate charges, while it simplifies and cheapens the collection."

"Yes, you are right. It is very much the same as if one hotel charges half a crown for bedroom and eighteen pence for service, while another hotel charges four shillings inclusive. So far, then, theory is entirely in favor of the capitalists."

"In favor of the capitalists?"

"Very much so. You have remitted all their other taxes, and now do not even tax them for the use of the river. I must confess, however, that I am very confused about the whole matter, and not the least

as regards yourself. I will be frank with you. At first I suspected you of collusion with the capitalists; but somehow they do not seem to be very grateful to you. And yet——"

"And yet?"

"I hardly know what to say. I am now satisfied as to your good intentions; but yet why are you so strenuously opposed to a Property or Income Tax?"

"For various reasons. In the first place because it is against the principle of our Constitution—that is, it is a direct interference with the liberties of the citizens. In the second, because such taxes fall on industry, and to that extent check or, at all events, hamper production."

"These cannot be your only reasons, nor even the weightiest. You cannot mean to say that by taxing the millionaire, who has acquired his wealth at the expense of the workers, you would check production. Why not recover at least a part of what they have stolen from others?"

"By a property tax?"

"Yes."

"Listen, and I will try to clear up the matter for you. But first I would draw your attention to the essential difference between the production of industry and the raw products of Nature—or, briefly, *land*. Suppose I owned a piece of land which yielded me an annual income of say £5, and that the current rate of interest were five per cent. You know that the selling value of such a piece of land would then be £100."

"Of course."

"Next we will suppose that a tax of ten shillings in the pound is imposed on ground values; so that, after paying this tax, the net revenue from the said land would only be £2 10s., then——"

"Then your land would be worth at the outside £50. And if the tax is twenty shillings in the pound, its capital value would be gone entirely. That you have already demonstrated wholesale; but it does not bear on my contention."

"I'll show you that it does, if you will be but patient. Let us now see how a property tax would work. Instead of one hundred pounds' worth of land, say that I possessed one hundred pounds' worth of coal, or bread, or any other industrial product, and that you imposed an all-round property tax of ten shillings in the pound. What would be the result of that? You are silent. Well, then, I will answer the question myself. My coal would at once be worth £150. But that is not all. In selling the coal, I put on my profit of say ten per cent. This, before the tax, would have amounted to £10; but after the imposition of the tax I would get ten per cent. profit on £150 instead of on £100, or £15 instead of £10. Who do you think would gain most by this transaction—the workers or the capitalist?"

"Go on!"

"This, then, is one of the reasons why I am opposed to taxing the products of human labor under any pretense whatever. Before giving you any of the others, I want you to realize and commit to memory this stern fact: *A tax on produce always falls ultimately on the consumer, and that because a tax on any artificial commodity always enhances the price of that commodity.*"

"That's true enough. The Custom Duties always increased the price of commodities, and their burden fell upon those who consumed them. But is not the same true of taxes on the raw product?"

"Confining the term raw product to the raw material of Nature—*i. e.*, land—No. For if you tax land, people are bound to produce in order to be able to pay the tax, or else they must give up the land to others to use. And since a tax on land values absorbs only the difference of the values of the different natural opportunities in use, its effect is simply to place the occupants of land of different qualities on an equality. That is, the opportunities of production would be the same to all, no matter what may be the difference in the quality of the land each occupies. But the value of commodities produced will be determined by their cost of production; that is, by the amount of labor expended. Hence, if you tax the manufactured article, you will thereby enhance the cost of the commodity; and if intending purchasers refuse to pay the increased price, any such commodity will cease to be produced."

"And your other points?"

"We have not yet finished with the first. You object to 'capital.' Now I have already drawn a distinction between real and fictitious capital: the former being represented by accumulated labor, the latter by parchments. In the one case you pay to recoup past labor—as when you pay for the use of a spade, a plane, or a house; in the other you pay for access to Nature."

"I understand that distinction."

"Well, then, let the plow represent ten days' labor (or its equivalent in gold), and the tax on it one day's labor——"

"I see your point. The return would then have to be altogether eleven days' labor."

"Exactly. Then note well the second economic

principle. *A tax on land values destroys fictitious capital, while a tax on industry creates it.* This may help you to understand why those gentlemen would prefer to have their property taxed rather than the land, and why the land tax has made waste paper of their scrip. There is yet another well-ascertained economic principle bearing on this point. *Every tax that falls on industry, no matter in what form imposed, can be, and always is, shifted on to the ultimate consumer.* But a tax on land values cannot be shifted, because, as above explained, it only places the occupants of different quantities or qualities of land on a footing of equality."

"I don't quite see that."

"And yet it is plain enough; but let me give you a concrete case. Supposing two farmers, *A* and *B*; the one possessing land that yields say 20 bushels of wheat, while the other land, with an equal outlay of labor and capital, yields 30 bushels. Now if we taxed the latter 10 bushels, this would simply equalize their respective gains. Each would now retain a net produce of 20 bushels. And manifestly the taxed farmer could not put an extra price on his wheat, because no one would pay him more for his wheat than they would to the other. But supposing we impose a tax of 1s. per bushel of wheat——"

"That will do; I can see it now."

"Then we can pass on to the next point. My object being to prevent people reaping where they had not sown, I have, of course, to destroy all fictitious capital; for then they could only demand service for service and value for value. But had I only imposed half the present amount of land tax, I should have abolished half only of this fictitious capital, leaving the lucky

owners still in possession of half of their privileges. And if, to supplement the revenue, I had imposed an equivalent tax upon property, I should have re-created thereby as much fictitious capital as the land tax had destroyed; that is, things would have remained pretty much as they were before."

"Good! You have now made it impossible for people to rob their fellows in the future. But how about the millions they possess already?"

"Good Heavens, man! Millions of nonsense! Have I not already made clear to you that these millions existed on paper only? that the wealth of these millionaires did not consist of what they actually possessed, but *in the share of the annual produce they could command?* Take any millionaire you please, and make an inventory of his present possessions. Two or three costly palaces, now rather expensive luxuries, with no rents coming in and a heavy ground tax to pay. Some fine furniture, a few ornaments, a few pounds of gold and silver, and a cellar full of scrip. How long can these perishable things last at best? And what harm can they do to anyone while they do last? What better means of 'getting at them' could you possibly devise than preventing them from plundering, and make them pay the full value of any privileges they wish to retain—so long as the few gimcracks in their possession will enable them to defray the expense thereof?"

CHAPTER IX.

THE LIBERTY AND PROPERTY DEFENSE LEAGUE.

"THEY were long in coming, but they have come at last. I thought they would."

This I whispered to my Socialist friend, as our conversation was interrupted by a large and "influential" deputation, which entered the audience chamber in procession, and with much ceremony. They consisted of Dukes, Lords, Lawyers, Bishops, and Stock-jobbers. There was some confusion among them about the order in which they should follow each other, and it was some time before they could settle the delicate point of "precedence" between lawyers, bishops, and "financiers"—as they euphemistically called those who knew how to make ducats breed. But at last they agreed that each bishop should be supported by a lawyer on one side, and a financier on the other, himself turning his face toward the ceiling, as if unconscious of the presence of either—as I heard the M. C. of the deputation arrange.

One of their number, oddly dressed, and "supported" by still more odd-looking creatures (carrying sticks, coronets, coats-of-arms, gold keys, etc., evidently designed to impress me with the speaker's importance —so it appeared in my dream) stepped forward and addressed me in a haughty manner. He said:

"I have not deemed it necessary to interfere sooner, because I felt sure that you would see the

folly, if not the wickedness, of your doings. But it seems that, like the class to which you belong, it is hopeless to expect that you would be guided by any moral considerations and so——"

I cut short his oration by asking him on whose behalf he was speaking and what business brought him and his comrades here.

"I am speaking on behalf of the following influential organizations, of all of which I am a prominent functionary—president of one, vice president or chairman of another, as the case may be."

And with these words he handed me a card, on which were printed a long list of various organizations, but of which I will mention a few only:

"The Property and Liberty Defense League."
"The Farmers' Protection Association."
"The London Ratepayers' Defense League."
"The United Empire Trade League."
"The Imperial Extension Committee."
"The Working Men's Block League."
"The Society for Promoting the Interests of Farm Laborers."
"The Religious Tract Society."
"The League for Spreading Morals and Religion among the Working Classes."

A cold shudder came over me as I looked from the card to the speaker and his allies, and from them to the list of cunningly worded titles of leagues and associations; for the "Councils" of these various organizations consisted of a long list of dukes, earls, lords, and baronets, with just a few "esquires" at the tail-end, but not a single farmer, laborer, or "commoner" under the status of £ with six figures to it. I could not help

thinking of some of Æsop's fables, especially that of the wolf and the lamb.

"Poor fellows," I sighed involuntarily. "Fancy the nice appointing a council of cats, hedgehogs, and ferrets to plead their cause and guard their interests!" But I endeavored to suppress my prejudices as much as I could, and resolved to treat their case on its merits.

"Well, then," I said, "in what capacity and on whose behalf are you speaking now?"

"In my capacity as chairman of *The Liberty and Property Defense League*, since this is the parent institution of all the others; that is, if the principles of this League were fully carried out, there would be no need for further agitation."

"In that case your language simply surprises me," I replied, "since I am only putting into practice and am enforcing those very principles which the said League have taken so much pains to disseminate. Allow me to read to you from your own *Liberty Annual* for 1892. There you say:

" 'What are human rights? They depend, as we *Liberty* people are constantly pointing out, in the frank recognition that every man or woman is the one true owner of his or her own body and mind; that, as a consequence, we have no right to limit or to restrict the use by any person of their own faculties (*always excepting those cases falling under the Spencerian limit, where persons employ their faculties to interfere by force or fraud with others in the equal use of their faculties*); that each person must be free to employ his faculties, or the product or gain of his faculties, according to his own choice, and to his own best advantage; that he

must be free to acquire or possess, to contract and exchange, to sell and to buy, to hire and to let, just as he himself, and those with whom he enters into free relations, think right.' "

"So you think your actions are in accordance with these true political principles?" he asked haughtily.

"I do, indeed; in strict accordance therewith."

"But, sir, it is this very principle of individual liberty you are violating."

"Indeed! I was not aware of it. Please enlighten my ignorance; and if your due liberties are in any way being encroached upon, your grievances shall receive prompt redress."

"I will state then, emphatically, that you *are* interfering with our liberties to dispose of our possessions in any way we like. You seem ignorant of the real meaning of true freedom. You have quoted one portion of our publication, but have ignored the other, which I will now read to you. We there say:

" 'This freedom in the use of faculties not only means free labor in the widest sense, but it means free exchange. It not only means that no man is to prevent my producing the articles of my own industry in my own way—whether they are farthing match boxes or the highest works of art; but it also means that no man is to limit or restrict my exchanging what I can produce or acquire through my faculties, in return for what my fellow-men produce or acquire through their faculties.' "

"Sir," I interposed, "I heartily concur with every word. Why, these principles are the very essence of our Constitution."

"You admit all this?"

"Yes, heartily and entirely."

"Well, then"—here he raised his voice—"I will finish the quotation, which goes on to say:

"'How does this apply to the case of land? It means that no person has the right to obstruct the free market for land—to do anything which prevents another man from acquiring land by exchanging against it the products or gain of his own faculties. In a word, it means that no man, or body of men, has the *moral* right to prevent any fellow-man from buying in an open market such land as he wishes to buy. The open market for land is a human right, just as sacred as the open market for bread or corn, and no person has the right to close it against his fellowmen. The buying of land is an integral part of the right of exchanging all articles of use one against another, which is derived from the primary right of exercising our faculties as we will. Whoever restricts that right of exchange makes war upon the ownership of each person of his own faculties—makes war upon the primary right of the human race.'"

I knew that paragraph; it was heavily scored in my own copy of that sophistical publication. I also knew the difficulty of briefly exposing the many sophistries it contained. It would, I recognized, be absurd to try and convince such men of the essential difference between the claims of the individual to the fullest possession and control of such things as were due to human exertions, and of the claims to control the *sources* of all such things. I might succeed in convincing the *ignorant*, but not the titled members of a

Liberty and Property Defense League. Whatever else may be true of them, I did not consider them ignorant people. So I said:

"Be it so; but if it is a human right to own land, is it not a right of *all* human beings?"

"It is; for those who happen to possess it, or who have acquired it through their faculties."

"Pray, by what faculties have you acquired your land?"

"That has nothing to do with the question."

"Excuse me, but it has a good deal to do with it, my lord. I have had a man here, the first applicant on my assuming office, now known as the reformed loafer, who possessed special faculties for acquiring land, and also other things for that matter. And had I not restrained his liberties he might have measured his faculties against those of your lordship."

"Then you *have* restrained a man? You have violated the liberties of man? By your own confession you have committed such an iniquity?"

"Yes, because it was one of those cases falling under the Spencerian limit, '*where persons employ their faculties to interfere by force or fraud with others in the equal use of their faculties.*' The liberty which that man claimed was to knock your lordship down, so that he might acquire by his own faculties the right of buying or selling land in the open market."

At this my opponent changed color, and altered his t[illegible]

"Oh, that, of course, alters the case! In that case you were quite right to interfere. But you have no right to prevent me doing with my land and my property as I please."

"None whatever, my lord. You may do with yours

just as you please. Who prevents you from doing so?"

"Who? Why you, of course. What business of yours is it whether I care to keep a deer park or not?"

"None whatever, as far as I can see. You may keep as many deer as you like, and I even think you might thus render a good service to the community by supplying the people with good venison, and so make a handsome profit for yourself."

"I am not a trader," he said indignantly. "And under your unrighteous rule I could not afford to keep deer for sport."

"Very well; then your lordship is at perfect liberty to dispose of your estate as you please. No doubt there are plenty of people ready to take it."

"But no one wants to pay for it."

"Well, if they do not want to, I have, according to your own doctrines, no power to compel them."

"It will do no good for you to assume this innocent ignorance. You know perfectly well that you have taxed away all the value of my land."

"No, not all the value; none of it which is due to the 'human faculties,' but only that which falls under the *Spencerian limit*. I have not taxed away the yielding power of the land; on the contrary, I have removed every tax and incumbrance whatever from industry, and any crop your lordship may raise from the land is free from every burden, save that of producing it."

"But I do not raise crops. I leave such pursuits to my tenants."

"In that case, as your lordship is also President of the Farmers' Protection Association, you will be glad

to learn that *their* crops are free from every encumbrance. And the fact that you can leave the farming to your tenants is evidence that your liberties are not interfered with."

"But they are, because all the crops that are raised on my estate are retained by the farmers, while I get nothing, or next to nothing."

"Probably because you do next to nothing. But I fear that we have wandered from the subject. You came here on behalf of farmer, artisan, working man, liberty, justice, and so on. I do not see on your card anything about landlords, or landlordism. Yet clearly you are advocating your own cause all this time."

"And am I not at liberty to do so?"

"Clearly. Only in that case we should get nearer to our purpose by plain sailing. Let us drop our masks, my lord, and speak plainly and to the point. I have abolished all taxes, direct and indirect, and have imposed a tax on unimproved land values. That is, I have resumed, on behalf of the community, that which belongs to the community, and which in a free State must belong to the community, or else equal liberties are impossible."

"Why so? Explain yourself."

"Because all men cannot be said to enjoy equal rights to life or liberty, while some of them have to pay to the others for permission to use the soil, to breathe the fresh air, or to bask in the light and sunshine. These things have not been produced by human faculties. They are essential to life, and to deprive others of them restricts them from employing their own faculties according to their choice and best advantage. Such acts clearly and pre-eminently fall within *the Spencerian limit*. See here what your pre-

ent champion and chosen authority, Mr. Spencer, wrote on this subject."

And picking up a paper from the table, I read as follows:

" 'Equity, therefore, does not permit property in land. For if *one* portion of the earth's surface may justly become the possession of an individual, and may be held by him for his sole use and benefit as a thing to which he has an exclusive right, then *other* portions of the earth's surface may be so held, and our planet may thus lapse altogether into private hands. Observe now the dilemma to which this leads. Supposing the entire habitable globe to be so inclosed, it follows that if the landowners have a valid right to its surface all who are not landowners have no right at all to its surface. Hence such can exist on the earth by sufferance only. They are all trespassers. *Save by the permission of the lords of the soil, they can have no room for the soles of their feet.* Nay, should the others think fit to deny them a resting-place, these landless men might equitably be expelled from the earth altogether. If, then, the assumption that land can be held as property involves that the whole globe may become the private domain of a part of its inhabitants, and if, by consequence, the rest of its inhabitants can then exercise their faculties—*can then exist even—only by consent of the landowners*, it is manifest that an exclusive possession of the soil necessitates *an infringement of the law of equal freedom.* For men who cannot live and move and have their being without the leave of others, cannot be equally free with these others.' "

"But Mr. Spencer himself has renounced this utterance of his," said his lordship.

"He may have *renounced*, but he has not *disproved* it," I retorted.

At this moment the noble lord turned round, as if looking for someone, and I noticed an elderly person gliding out of the room, shielding his face behind his hat.

"The land I own has been in my family since the Conquest. No one has ever claimed it or could claim it."

"Ah," said I; "there was no Liberty League in existence, you see, to teach people their inalienable rights."

"With your abstract morals I have no concern," he burst out indignantly.

"So it seems, my lord; yet you came here burdened with moral duties and moral indignation. But I suppose you find morals distasteful when you are required to observe them yourself."

"None of your impudence, sir. Are we to have our ancient rights thus interfered with?"

"Time, my lord, may be a great legalizer, but it cannot make a wrong into a right. Nay, the longer a wrong endures, the greater does the wrong become. You say your family owned certain lands for centuries. That means that your family has plundered the people, and deprived them of all their natural rights, for centuries. Do you not think it were time that this practice were discontinued?"

"But what compensation do you offer?"

"Compensation for what? For ceasing to take from the farmer the best part of his crop? Compensation for allowing Britons to live on British soil? For allowing them to use their faculties for the satisfaction of their own needs? Be advised by me, and mention that word 'compensation' no more. Consider what you and

yours have taken from the people since the time of the Conqueror. The buildings and other improvements on your estate are still secured to you as being due to human labor. You are aware, however, that it was not *your* labor which built them. You are left in their possession because we do not wish to legislate retrospectively, and because we wish to bury the past. Though unrighteously gotten, we leave you in possession of *past plunder*, and simply enjoin on you to sin no more. I would not, therefore, advise you to start the cry of *compensation*, lest those who have been your victims may take it up. Verily, you would find it hard to give adequate compensation to those over whom your family has lorded it for these many centuries, and for the many broken hearts your rule has occasioned. Let the sleeping dog lie, my lord, is my earnest advice to you. Be satisfied with our mercy, and ask not for justice, lest you might receive more justice than is to your liking."

CHAPTER X.

LAWYERS' QUIBBLES.

His lordship looked exceedingly uncomfortable, not to say mortified, and this caused great embarrassment among his *confrères*. He was about to say something, as if anxious to restore his dignity—which seemed to have completely deserted him during the lesson I read him about compensation—but could only stammer a few incoherent words about cruelty, theft, and illegality. His followers, seeing his embarrassment, pushed a lawyer forward—a little man with a huge wig, under which he almost disappeared.

"We want none of your rhetoric, nor your insolence either, but shall insist on having our legal claims recognized," he burst out. To which I quietly replied:

"As for *legal* claims, you have absolutely none. As a lawyer you ought to know so much, that a legal claim can only be made under existing law, and not under laws that had once existence but have been repealed. You know what the present law is; and according to that your claim could not be granted, for the simple reason that it would be contrary to law, and hence *illegal*."

"By what right have all these statutes been annulled?"

"Rather a strange question this for a lawyer. What right does it require to repeal any Act of Parliament save another Act? I repeat it again, if you have noth-

ing better to urge in support of your claim than the *law*, that is the written enactments of the stronger party, then you may as well save yourself further trouble. You are free, however, to appeal against the law on grounds of *equity*—that is, you would have to argue your case by what you call 'rhetoric.'"

"Is sentiment to take the place of law?"

"No; but law must be based on principles of equity, otherwise the law is *inequitable;* or, as the same term is spelled in modern times (whereby its true meaning is half hidden), *iniquitous.* You know perfectly well that 'laws'—that is, lawyers' justice—have always been changed and altered, making illegal to-day what was legal yesterday, and *vice versa.* There is nothing new, therefore, in changing a law, nor in enforcing obedience to it after it has been changed. Indeed, it was always the business of your profession to enforce the law as it stood, whether it was just or unjust. With you lawyers the word 'justice' had but one meaning, namely, the enforcement of the provisions of the law. No matter whether it made awards to scoundrels and crushed the innocent, so long as it could be shown that judgment was in accordance with the written law it passed under the name of justice."

"We want no lecture from you, but our rights."

"I am giving you your 'rights'—your *legal* rights—since you will have it so. You appeal to 'law,' and sneer at the principles of justice and equity as 'rhetoric.' Be it so. My judgment then is that the law is against you. Is not that all you can reasonably expect on those terms?"

"But this law is monstrous, as it benefits some at the expense of others. Is that your idea of equity?"

"No, it is not. If you can show that the law is iniquitous, you have made out a good case; but you decline to discuss principles of justice."

"I decline to recognize any new principles of law or legislation. There is no precedent for such a monstrous iniquity, such wholesale robbery."

"Very well; since you will have it so, I allow you to argue the justice of the law from your own point of view, that is, on grounds of precedent. I have already told you that there is ample precedent for changing a 'law'—more correctly speaking an *enactment*. Our present enactment may be neither just nor wise. What of that? Is there not ample precedent for enforcing such a law, nevertheless?"

"On what ground?"

"On the ground of *expediency*, the leading principle of all past legislation."

"But law has always been held to protect property and liberty, while this law deprives people of both. This is an arbitrary law, which favors some at the expense of others."

"Can you mention a single law you have helped in passing that did not do the same; that was not therefore *arbitrary* in the strictest sense of the word? Since you refuse to discuss principles of equity, let us get at your own principles of legislation. You have taxed people—forced them to make certain contributions to the public revenue. Was that not equivalent to taking part of a man's property?"

"But taxation is necessary, as without it Government cannot be carried on. You will say perhaps that you can plead the same thing. But then you are singling out one class only for taxation—landowners."

"Not land*owners*, but land-*values*, and that because

we hold that these values belong to all. But of that more when you will condescend to discuss principles. At present, to give you every advantage, I will admit, *for argument's sake*, that it is a class tax. What then? Precedence is all in favor of class taxation, as I will show you. Have you not singled out people who kept horses or valets for special taxation?"

"That was done because people who can afford such things can also afford to contribute to the public revenue."

"Good! Then I take it that one of your canons of taxation is that people who have should be made to pay, simply because they have it, and irrespective of how they got it. Is that it?"

"Provided you do not take too much."

"I see. Then you think it would not be *arbitrary?* You have also taxed tea, currants, coffee, chicory, beer, and tobacco. You are aware that this tax was not, in the majority of cases, paid by well-to-do folks. What was your guiding principle in this case?"

"These are very stupid questions. A revenue we must have somehow, and this is about the easiest way of getting it. Besides, the people who pay it are not even aware of it."

"Oh! we are getting at your principles of justice by degrees. Then, according to your moral code, pilfering in the public interest is justifiable, provided it can be done deftly, without the people from whom you take it being aware of it?"

"But the taxes which the State collects for public purposes are not pilfering."

"I thank you for this admission, although I do not share your view. If a man is made to pay more than he receives in return for it, it is theft, by whomsoever

it is committed. For in that case, are not some benefited at the expense of others?"

"The customs tax is levied on every person, without distinction, and is therefore perfectly equitable."

"That is not true. It is not collected on absentee landowners; and even if it were, the tax does not fall equally heavy on all. For instance, a child in a mill earns four shillings a week. Out of this he has to pay, in taxes on tea and currants, at least threepence a week, or one-sixteenth of his earnings. Do your dukes and lords pay one-sixteenth of their incomes in customs duties? And even if they did, would the taking of £100 from a weekly revenue of £1600 mean the same thing as the taking of 3d. from 48d.?"

"We cannot enter into that. We stand here for our rights."

"So do the millions of people to whom you have denied their rights these many centuries. You want law according to precedent. Well, what precedent is there? This—*might is right*. For your laws, were they not all the enactments of the stronger party made in party interests?"

"Guided by principles of justice."

"Oh, fie, fie on your cowardice to pretend such a thing! Have you not admitted yourself that you got your revenue as best you could, and that the only principle by which you were guided was the getting of it—no matter how you got it and what were its consequences?"

"Its consequences were law and order."

"Every brigand who has power to enforce his mandates maintains law and order, according to your view of law. But let us further into the principle of your laws. You have taxed the poor toiler and rich land-

owner, taking from the former an incomparably larger percentage of his earnings than from the latter. But how did you apportion the benefit bought with these taxes?"

"Every citizen shared alike in the benefits of Government."

"That was a legal fiction, or, in plain English, a gross and palpable falsehood. If a road was made out of this public fund, did the landless toiler benefit as much by the expenditure as the owner of the land? Or did the poor drudges in mill and mine benefit equally with your classes when millions were spent in foreign wars? Was it in the interest of the toilers that you maintained armed forces in Egypt and Ireland, and not rather in the interest of bondholders and landowners? Is it not true that whenever improvements were made out of the public funds, the rents of the landlord and the taxes of the tenants were increased at the same time? Was it not but yesterday that a proposal to assess such increased expenditure on the property, the value of which was enhanced by it, was strenuously opposed by your clients?"

"Because it was against law; an innovation which was resisted by landowners because it was against their interests."

"Just so. And therefore the masses have now so altered the law that it should be in their own interest. Is it not simply a question of which party or class can best serve its own interests? On that score, then, we can cry quits. We might reply that we tax landowners because taxes are needed, and they can best afford to pay it—seeing that rents are earned without any effort whatever. But we have much stronger grounds than that to justify our mode of raising

revenue. We say that these ground rents are paid by the people, *the whole of the people*, alike, and are due to the presence of the people and the public expenditure; hence in taxing the revenue derived from the presence of the people for public purposes we are taxing all alike. I might also point out to you how differently the well-being of the community is affected by such a substitution of a land tax for other forms of taxation; but I fear that would have no interest for you—that you would call it——"

"Rhetoric and nonsense!"

"Quite so. Therefore I have no more to say to you. You want to hear practical common sense only—legal common sense. Well, it is this: the people do not find it any longer practical or expedient to toil and moil and allow a set of idlers to take all their earnings from them, and to be starved both in mind and body. They have been taught by your class that this was being done in obedience to 'law,' and that this was your only sanction. They have therefore now so altered this law that such things shall no longer be legal. This, gentlemen, settles the legal aspect of your case. But you are free to appeal on higher grounds—on grounds of equity and justice—against the validity of the law itself; for we do not base our claim to the land on fictions of the law, but hold that we all have an equal and inalienable right to it. Show that we are wrong in this, and you have won your case—no matter what the consequences may be."

"Very well, I will."

CHAPTER XI.

SOME MORE LEGAL LEGERDEMAIN.

HERE follows the subsequent conversation between the lawyer and myself, to the best of my recollection.

Lawyer: "You have endeavored to prove that on *legal* principles the community have a right to deprive some people of their property. In the same breath, however, you denounced these legal principles as iniquitous. Will you state now a principle that will justify this monstrous law?"

I: "I have done so already. It is the principle that every individual has a right to himself."

L.: "Whence that right? Are you aware that great authorities, both legal and scientific, have not only denied the existence of what are called natural rights, but have actually proved that there are none? I will only mention Maine and Professor Huxley."

I: "I am aware of the fact, and will admit at once the force of their arguments. They have convinced me that I have no natural rights whatever. But in doing so, they have also convinced me that no one else has, since their arguments apply equally to all human beings."

L.: "And does it not follow from this that, inasmuch as you have no natural rights, that you have no right to the land either?"

I: "It does. But it also follows that you and others have no right to it either. It amounts to this: If you

would press this doctrine as a justification of your claim to the land, because of the absence of any specific 'natural law'—whatever you may mean by that term—you could defend it against others by brute force only. For to say that nobody has a right to it is tantamount to saying that one person has as much (or as little) right to it as anybody else. That is, the party of 'law and order,' who are now preaching this doctrine, are driven to the extremity of proclaiming lynch law as the highest authority of their possessions. For on that theory the land can be yours only until somebody is strong enough to drive you off it, or knocks you on the head."

L.: "A nice doctrine that, is it not?"

I: "Pray, do not saddle me or the people with it. It emanates from your own party. I only admitted the force of the logic by which this new doctrine has been arrived at. Not so new, either; as it has been acted on in the past, and is still being acted on in savage communities. Not only were people dispossessed of land and all forms of property, but themselves have been made into chattel slaves. Under such conditions security to life, liberty, or property was out of question. Everybody lived in constant dread of robber or assassin. The greatest scoundrel, the most cunning, was the most dreaded, and homage was paid to him as the Koning, Konig, or King. We need not enter into the history of civilization. Sufficient for us to know that people got tired of this ceaseless strife and feud, and at last agreed to live neighborly together on principles of equity—that is by recognizing in each other the right to equal freedom."

L.: "What principle is there in that?"

I: "This, that when A toils, he has the right to

enjoy the fruits of his labor, and B has no right to take it forcibly from him; since in that case A would be B's slave to that extent. On the other hand, A is not allowed to prevent B exerting himself in a similar manner. They respect each other's freedom for the simple reason that if A denied the rights of B, he at the same time would deny his own rights, and could henceforth defend his life and liberty by main force only."

L.: "Then you hold that land cannot belong to an individual?"

I: "Not as his exclusive property."

L.: "Does it not follow, then, that if it cannot be owned by an individual, neither can it by a number of individuals? Oh, you admit it. Then, since the community is made up of individauls, it cannot rightfully belong to the community either."

I: "That is so."

L.: "And what follows *inevitably* from that admission?"

This question was put in a tone of triumphant expectation. Seeing the *Liberty Annual* in his hand, whence he took his inspiration, I knew what answer he expected. In that publication some over-grown, but not over-clever, schoolboy argues from the above premises that since land cannot be rightly owned by the community, therefore it must be left in the possession of a class. I smiled at the silliness of such reasoning. The lawyer mistook this for embarrassment, and so repeated his question with greater emphasis:

L.: "If the land cannot rightfully belong to the community, what follows from this admission?"

I: "This: *That the community has no right to dispose of it;* and that if at any time the community did take

upon itself to say how or by whom the land shall be owned in the future, such an act would have no greater validity than if I now tried to dispose, without your authority, of your watch or your own person."

L.: "Oh!—h'm! But suppose I gave you that authority, would you have the right or the power to dispose?"

I: "Then neither would be required. Then practically it would be yourself who disposed of yourself."

L.: "And cannot a whole nation do the same?"

I: "Each for himself—yes! But not one for another. You could become my servant or my slave if you liked. But you could not barter away the liberties of your descendants. Of course you might sign me a paper promising that your descendants shall be the slaves of my descendants for ever and ever. Whether your descendants will be fools enough to obey such instructions, or whether they will simply laugh at the idiocy or villainy of their grandsire is another matter."

L.: "To whom does the land belong then?"

I: "To nobody. I have already told you that the people can do one of two things. Either fight and devour each other, or agree to live peaceably together on *equal* terms. From this we derive our principle of *equalness* or 'Equity'; perfect Equity meaning that no one should enjoy an advantage over his fellows at their cost or to their detriment. The land belonging to no one, they must agree to use it in such a manner only as is consistent with this principle. This at once precludes the possibility of disposing of the land forever. For, even if all the people were agreed at any time on a division of the land among themselves, they could not decide for as yet unborn generations. Hence we

contend that the land can never become the exclusive property of any number of individuals, but can only be held in usufruct."

L.: "So that you deny the right to private property altogether."

I: "No; on the contrary, I contend for the sacredness of that right. Since every individual has a right to himself, he has a right to the things which are due to his own exertions. To deny him this right, or to deprive him of the results of his labor, is to deprive him to that extent of his personal liberty."

L.: "I quite understand that. But if you deny private ownership in land, you must also deny private ownership in everything else. For have you not yourself admitted that all things consist chiefly of the raw material of nature—that is, land? You deny us the right to land because, you say, we have not made it. On the other hand you claim a right to your watch because you say you have made it. Have you made the silver also? And if not, have not all an equal claim to the silver of that watch, especially since the quantity of silver is, like that of land, limited?"

I: "You had an equal right to it, and that is the reason I had to compensate you—that is the community—for it before I could have the exclusive use of it. That is just why we claim that all rents and royalties must go to the community."

L.: "That does not help us over the difficulty. I will state to you the objection in the precise words of our *Liberty Annual:* 'If in any real sense, as distinguished from a rhetorical sense, the land belongs of right to everybody, then everybody, without exception, must at all times and at all places be able to have the use of it. We must have a communistic anarchy in

the most thorough sense. There must be no plot of land used by A which is not equally open to B or C to use also; for if there were such a plot of land reserved to A, then everybody who is not A would be defrauded of his rights.' What answer can you give to this?"

I: "A Scotch answer, by asking you another question. Did his lordship, in the days of his supremacy, have the use—the *actual use*—of what he then called *his* lands?"

L.: "Well, his tenants used them."

I: "And did then his lordship consider himself defrauded of his rights?"

L.: "No; because he reserved to himself the revenue from it."

I: "Then, if A has the exclusive use of a particular plot of land, and for this privilege pays whatever advantages accrue to him therefrom to all those who are not A, how can you make out that they would be defrauded of their rights?"

L.: "Who is to decide? For—to again quote from our *Liberty Annual*—'If the land belong to *everybody*, then it is everybody (minus nobody) who must decide how it shall be disposed of. In such case no majority and no Governent can dispose of it, just because neither a majority nor a Government is *everybody*.'"

I: "That is very well reasoned. It is precisely the view we all take of the matter, and hence the Government does not interfere. It does not say this block of land is to be occupied by A, and this by B or C, but lets the people decide that for themselves and among themselves. All the Government does is to collect from each occupier the surplus value, the 'unearned increment,' or the 'economic rent.' So long as this is paid,

the occupier is left in undisturbed possession, since what he produces over and above that is his own. Without such security of tenure it were not possible to insure that those who sow shall reap. All we need do is to take from the harvest on behalf of the community that part which is due to some natural advantage, and therefore belongs equally to all."

L.: "But who is to decide what shall be the rent?"

I: "We all have a word in that, and decide it—mostly unconsciously—as the rent has always been decided, viz., by supply and demand. Sites differ both in position and fertility, as do the tastes and occupations of the people. Some sites are more desirable than others, and it often happens that several people wish to occupy some particular plot; the result is that the rent of such plots goes up. Suppose you wanted to live in Belgravia, and you found the Square already occupied; the Government could do nothing for you, but you yourself could. You could offer to buy someone out, offer a high price. The owner does not move. Others do the same thing; he still remains. Will not that send rents up at once? So that although the possessor of that plot would enjoy an enviable position, he would have to pay for it to the community a little more than the latter think it worth. That is, he would be in possession of that plot because of all the applicants for it he deems it worth the most."

L.: "How will you set that machinery to work?"

I: "That machinery is already at work, and has been for centuries. For if rent in Belgravia is higher than in Homerton, it is because there are more applicants for it. And if some prefer living elsewhere notwithstanding, it is because they do not set the same value on the privilege of living there as those who

consent to pay the high rent. The whole principle is a very simple one, and I will illustrate it to you. A man left to his five sons five cottages, one to each, without stipulating which should belong to this or that man. But inasmuch as the cottages differed in size and quality, he provided that whoever should choose one of the better cottages should make adequate compensation to the others, the sons to decide among themselves both how the cottages were to be divided, and what compensation there should be paid, and to whom."

L.: "And each of the sons, of course, wanted the best cottage, and tried to make out it was the worst."

I: "It came to that, and not being able to come to an understanding——"

L.: "They went to law."

I: "They would have done so had they been fools. But not having a taste for lawyers' justice, and, without being necessarily bad or unduly selfish, desiring to possess what was willed to them by their father, they put up the cottages to auction among themselves. You perceive what followed. There was bidding against each other, until one or two of the brothers thought that they preferred the price offered to the privilege of living in that particular cottage, and so dropped out of the competition. Then the three continued bidding against each other, and so on, until the last bid was higher than either of the others thought it was worth."

L.: (grumbling): "Such practices, were they to become common, would be the ruin of the legal profession."

I: "This is the principle by which rents are deter-

mined. You see, it was 'everybody minus nobody' of those concerned who determined who should possess each of the cottages, and also fixed the amount of compensation. For I need hardly tell you that the money which the five brothers paid for the cottages was equally divided among them."

CHAPTER XII.

LEGAL ETHICS.

TRUTH compels me to record that the lawyer made me lose my patience, a circumstance which will surprise nobody acquainted with legal methods. His object was clearly to confuse rather than to argue. Instead of endeavoring to show that the people behind him had a right to the soil, he insisted on raising side issues. He argued either that others had no better right to the land—a point on which I heartily concurred with him—or that the administration would not be perfect, and so forth; matters which, however important, have nothing whatever to do with the right claimed by a few individuals to own the sources of nature.

"What you have to show," I said rather impatiently, "is that your clients have a right to own the land, and not that others have not. On this point we are agreed, of course. It is not our intention to take the land from Lord Rigmarole and then give it to Patrick O'Mahony, as some semi-idiots used to propose. If private ownership in land is wrong, as we contend, then it is wrong in all cases, no matter who may be the owner. If, on the other hand, it is right, then I grant you not only that we have no right to tax away all its value, as we now are doing, but that the State has no right whatever to interfere with landowners in the disposal of *their* land—if theirs it is—nor to dictate to

them on what terms they are to let it or to whom. The question is not one of expediency or arbitrary force, but of right. Either the land is yours by right, or it is not."

L.: "That is the question."

I: "But this question cannot be decided in the way you argue. Your contention is that the proposed administration is faulty—is, in short, not absolutely perfect. Granted it is not; does it follow from that that you have a right to the soil? If you intend to suggest better methods of administration, with the object of more thoroughly securing to every individual his jointure, we shall be glad to listen to you. But surely you cannot fail to see that in doing so you practically abandon all your claims to exclusive ownership."

L.: "How so?"

I: "Because when you urge that under the new system everybody would not get his full rights to the land, the inference is that more thorough nationalization is required; but it does not establish your claim."

L.: "Our contention is this: You object to private ownership in land, because some people are thereby deprived of what you call their natural rights. We now prove to you that even under State ownership—for your Single Tax amounts to State ownership of the land—everybody will not get a full equivalent of his share in it."

I: "From which you argue that inasmuch as our system is not the best conceivable, therefore we should continue the worst possible. This conclusion does not follow from the premises, and certainly does not make good your claim. At best you might submit such a proposal as an alternative method of disposing of the

land, which the community may accept or refuse. But then again you would practically abandon your claims to the soil."

L.: "But that we have not admitted yet."

I: "Then it is no business of yours to discuss how the land should be dealt with, by those who, you contend, have no right to it. The raising of such side issues can then have one meaning only, viz., to avert attention from the main point by throwing dust into people's eyes. Confine youself to proving that you have a valid title to the land, and not that you are good landlords or the community bad administrators. If you cannot do this the land belongs to the community to use."

L.: "And if we can?"

I: "Then we must abide by the consequences. The people stand up for their *rights* and not the law. If the land is yours, then you have a good *legal* right, if you choose, to give notice to all your tenants to quit, and turn the land into deer parks or sheep walks. *If the land is yours*, then you are legally entitled to say that you will not let your land to Baptists or to Methodists, nor allow people who vote Radical or Liberal to settle on *your* land. You may then decree when, where, whom, and how people should marry——"

"That would be an interference with the rights of liberty," suggested someone behind me sarcastically.

I: "So it would; and these gentlemen are all members of the Liberty and Property Defense League. But could they not say, 'I don't let *my land* to Baptists or Radicals or to carroty people,' nevertheless? Thus, for instance, you are *free* to be this and that, and I am *free* to do with *my* land as I please.

Have not such things been done? Nay, are not the very objects of this sophistical League to secure to a comparatively few individuals the power to do with the rest of the community as they pleased? Is not that the kind of liberty for which they are fighting?"

L.: "Is not that remark beside the question?"

I: "I fear it is. Well, let us come to the point. Have you anything to support your claims?"

L.: "Yes, I am coming to the point as you desire it. You have yourself admitted that there are no natural rights. Hence, the only existing right is that which the law gives. Here then are *our* titles" (throwing a bundle of parchments at me), "where are *yours?* Can you show a better title than we do?"

I: "Oh, oh! That is your little game. To that end then have you employed philosophers to show there are no natural rights. But, good sir, your philosophy falls somewhat short of common sense; for if there are no *natural* rights, then the 'rights' on which you rely might be suspected as being *unnatural.* Can I not make you understand that this is a great question of equity, of *right* or *wrong*, and that such questions cannot be decided by cunning word conjurings? You want a better title than your parchments. In yonder field a man is digging up potatoes. He tilled the field and planted the potatoes, and now thinks he has a right to the result. We both say to the man that he has not a right to the *whole* crop. Honest man that he is, he declares himself willing to give up part or the whole of his crop, but before doing so would fain know if he, the tiller, has no right to those potatoes, who has? Is it not right and natural that the man who claims part of the crop should be required to show a better right to it than the man who raised it? This is

the real issue. Show what better right you have to the produce than the man who produced it?

L.: "Nay, I put that question to you. Our right is here, secured to us by these deeds."

I: "Signed by whom? By the original owner—*the producer*—of the soil?"

L.: "Signed by kings, in the name of the nation, and ratified by the common consent of the people."

I: "If that were true, it would not establish the validity of these deeds, since no generation has the right to command to future generations how they shall live on this globe. But it is not even true. When has this *common consent* been given, or even asked for? When the Romans butchered the ancient Britons? When the Danish hordes devastated the country? Or when the Norman bastard and his fellow-robbers invaded these islands? Or when some king handed over whole tracts of country to his paramours or his bastard sons?"

L.: "The kings have acted in the name of the people, and these have not protested, which is equal to common consent."

I: "Another of your legal fictions, and one of which you ought to be heartily ashamed. Is it not true rather that the people have continually protested against the tyranny of arbitrary rule, but have been answered by dungeon or the gallows? Look down the list of your statutes, the penalties that were imposed on free speech, on 'sedition,' as every kind of protest against tyranny has been called, and you will find in the laws that have been passed to suppress these *protests* ample evidence of their reality. What were all the popular risings but protests? What, even in more recent times, were the meetings of the people in parks

and squares but loud protests against tyranny and arbitrary rule, which you have suppressed whenever you could by main force?"

L.: "You refer to illegal assemblies."

I: "Because, after having robbed the people of their birthrights, their protests have been declared illegal. So that even granted that the people, either from inability or from ignorance—it is immaterial which—have not protested sooner, they are protesting now. Let it be granted that the validity of these deeds is now questioned for the first time. Is it a good answer to say that because you have exacted tribute by false deeds for so long, therefore you have a right to continue the practice?"

L.: "You do not put the case fairly. We say that our legal claims have always been held to be good."

I: "Never! All you can say is that they have not been scrutinized before too closely. Let me read to you what Blackstone, your legal authority, has written on the subject:

" 'There is nothing which so generally strikes the imaginations, and engages the affections of mankind, as the right of property; or that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe. *And yet there are very few that will give themselves the trouble to consider the original and foundation of this right.* Pleased as we are with the possession, we seem afraid to look back to the means by which it was acquired, *as if fearful of some defect in our title;* or at best we rest satisfied with the decision of the laws in our favor, without examining the reason or authority upon

which those laws have been built. We think it enough that our title is derived by the grant of the former proprietor, by descent from our ancestor, or by the last will and testament of the dying owner; not caring to reflect that (accurately and strictly speaking) there is no foundation in nature or in natural law why a set of words upon parchment should convey the dominion of land; why the son should have a right to exclude his fellow-creatures from a determinate spot of ground because his father has done so before him; or why the occupier of a particular field, when lying on his death-bed, and no longer able to maintain possession, should be entitled to tell the rest of the world which of them shall enjoy it after him. These inquiries, it must be owned, would be useless and even troublesome in common life. It is well if the mass of mankind will obey the laws when made, without scrutinizing too nicely into the reasons for making them——' "

The lawyer coughed and wiped his spectacles, but made no reply. I continued:

"Nor has the land ever been regarded as your absolute property, even by the law, bad as it was. What did the fixation of judicial rents and compulsory expropriation mean but a denial of that exclusive right which you claim? If the land had been held to be yours in the same sense as you may claim ownership of a watch or a table, why this interference? And why did you submit to it so meekly? I will answer this last question for you. Because your title was bad, and you were afraid to urge your claims to extremities lest the fraud might be discovered."

L.: "The law——"

I: "The law, as it stood, right up to 1893, imposed a tax on ground rents of four shillings in the pound. But though this was *law*, the tax had nevertheless not been paid."

L.: "But it has been paid according to assessment."

I: "That is, in Latin a *suppressio veri*, or, in English, a lie, and you know it well. The four shillings were on an assessment made about two hundred years ago, but the rent was collected on present values; so that in parts of London, instead of four shillings in the pound, as required by the said law, the tax did not amount to more than a fraction of a penny. Time and again a return has been moved for in the Commons, with a view of showing this fraudulent evasion of the tax, but has been *arbitrarily* refused by the House of Landlords. These four shillings meant only one-fifth of what the people were defrauded annually, and should, *according to law*, have been paid, and was yet withheld—withheld contrary to statute law. Was this, too, by *common consent?*"

L.: "We cannot enter into that; nor can we reopen things of the past. It is a novel thing to come down on people to-day for acts committed, or supposed to have been committed, centuries ago."

I: "Now it is you who state the case unfairly. We claim no restitution for acts committed in the past; but, on the other hand, do not allow that a wrong may be continued to-day because it has originated long ago. Let me illustrate the case. His lordship there told us that his family has been in possession of certain estates since the Norman invasion. A goodly long time indeed. Supposing now, that he discovered the steward of his estate had defrauded him of so much of his revenue annually, would it be a good defense if the

steward pleaded that these frauds have been in vogue by his predecessors ever since the Conquest, and therefore claimed to be allowed to continue in abstracting a certain sum annually forever? This is precisely your case. You can show no valid title to the land; indeed, you have hardly attempted it. All you say is that this tribute has been collected by your predecessors for centuries."

L.: "And that we are not responsible for past actions."

I: "True. Nor was the steward responsible for what his predecessors had stolen. That is not the point. The question is, whether his lordship, on hearing his steward's singular defense, will say to him, 'Ah, that is all right then. Had you been thieving from me for a few years only, I would have sent you to the treadmill. But since you say this thieving has been going on for centuries, and that you actually paid my former steward a large sum for the privilege of stealing from me, as he and others have done before, I recognize your right to continue the theft for ever and ever;' or whether his lordship would not rather put a summary stop to the practice as soon as he discovered the fraud."

CHAPTER XIII.

PRIEST AND PEASANT.

My last utterance provoked the Bishops. Not that they needed much provocation; for all through the interview I could plainly see their eagerness to interfere, and that they were only waiting for some plausible excuse that would enable them to veil their partisanship under the cloak of spiritual duty. My simile of the dishonest steward afforded them a splendid opportunity, and they did not miss it. About half a dozen of them "nudged" the one who had the broadest phylactery, and whom I therefore regarded as their chief. But how I came to know his name, or why he should have been known to me as the Right Reverend Caiaphas, D. D., LL. D., I am unable to tell, since I do not remember anybody having introduced him by that or any other name. With a solemn, but not angry face, he said:

"I protest against your likening landlords to thieves. Such language should not be used of honest men, however humble their station, still less of gentlemen who occupy the foremost places in Church and State, and who on every occasion where Christian work is to be done——"

"Your indignation, sir," I interrupted, "would be perfectly justified had I done so. I did not liken landowners to thieves, but only wished to illustrate that land monopoly was not a single wrong act, which might be forgiven and forgotten, but is a perpetual

wrong, and that the monopolist is in a position of exacting tribute *in continuity*, so long as his monopoly is allowed to exist."

"Still there is no need for using such offensive language."

"I am sorry if my words have given offense. But, although aware of the unsavoriness of the simile, it was not meant to apply to persons, but to the *institution of landownership*. And this being in my opinion morally indefensible, I naturally—and, as I think, legitimately—am endeavoring to present it in its native ugliness. The simile was, perhaps, an unfortunate one, and I hasten to substitute another for it. We will suppose, then, a village community living on what they produce from woods, fields, and meadows, and that the only road which leads from the said woods and fields to their habitations was *owned* by an individual, and that this individual, by virtue of his exceptionally advantageous position, did—well, did not *take* from the people, but had the power to *make them give* a certain amount of gate-money before they could carry their crops to their homes. Suppose, also, that the amount of this 'toll' was determined by the quantity which the people have raised in the fields; or, worse still, by the quantity which the man on the road thought they *might or could have raised*; taking all from those whose crop did not come up to his expectations, and nearly all from those who did exceptionally well; leaving them just sufficient to support life, so that they might be able to come again that way with fresh supplies, and thereby enable him to take fresh booty——"

"Stop!" exclaimed the Bishop. "Instead of softening down, you only aggravate your offense. Why, you are now actually describing a highwayman."

"That's very unfortunate for your cause," said I; "for I was only describing the functions of landlordism."

"Then you had better leave it alone altogether. Your similes are most objectionable. I know your views, and agree, in the abstract, with much what you say. As for the poor, I need hardly tell you that they have all my sympathies. But——"

"But?"—I asked impatiently, at hearing once more these stale, threadbare platitudes.

"My son," replied the Bishop with pious emotion, "two wrongs do not make a right. You cannot right past wrongs by committing new ones, perhaps more grievous than the first."

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed. "Do you call it wrong to *stop* wrong-doing?"

"You are interfering with ancient customs and institutions."

"Would you have us understand that the injunction 'THOU SHALT NOT STEAL,' does not apply where theft can be shown to have been an ancient custom?"

"You are again using strong language. These gentlemen here have their documents, which secure to them certain rights. God forbid that the nation should break its moral obligations."

"Obligations! Moral obligations! Where is the morality of the thing? Is it in the fact that millions of people are daily born into this world without a resting-place for the soles of their feet?"

"I fear you are too worldly-minded, and think of people's soles before you think of their souls."

"Because they have soles first; and if there is no sure resting-ground for these, the soul cannot healthily develop. We will pass by the untold misery, the

starvation, the disappointed hopes, and broken hearts of the millions of disinherited people, occasioned by this confiscation of the soil. I will not reason with you that all this suffering need not have existed but for this monstrously iniquitous institution, which, till now, deprived the masses of their patrimony (for surely, to you, right reverend sir, I may speak of the land as the PATRIMONY of the people without fear of being reminded that there are no natural rights!), but will confine my remarks to the share this *ancient custom* had in producing crime and vice. Did it never occur to you that fully ninety-nine per cent. of all crime and vice may be traced to land monopoly?"

"That is a ridiculous statement to make. Lying and hypocrisy are great vices, but I fail to see any connection between these and land monopoly."

"Because you are blind, reverend leader of the blind. Bethink yourself, and see whether most of the crimes and vices are not begotten of poverty or *the fear of poverty*. Burgling, stealing, cheating, swindling, forgery, legacy hunting, arson, child murder, and suicides: are not all these crimes committed out of need or for the sake of pecuniary gain? And is not this eagerness for wealth, where it is not occasioned by actual poverty and want, due to a *fear of poverty*? Even lawyers' quibblings, the perjuries in the law courts, and certainly *simony*, may be included in the list of sinful acts which spring from this source. Now, I put it to you whether there is any necessity for that fear of poverty; whether, if each pair of hands were free to work, each mouth could not get its loaf of bread; whether, if the people were not denied access to bountiful Nature, there would be that stern necessity for taking thought for their life, what they

shall eat, or wherewithal they shall clothe themselves?"

"Ah! it's perverse human nature."

"You libel human nature, which is capable of greatness and nobility, were it not stunted by unnatural conditions. Human nature is prompted by the natural instinct of self-preservation. Put no impediment in the way of their existence, and men are kind and noble. Threaten their existence, and they become fierce and ferocious. When you are sitting at your sumptuous table, with full knowledge that there will be more than enough to satisfy the appetites of all those present, you are kind and attentive to your neighbor. The soup that has been placed before you, you pass courteously to him, because you know you will not lose by your politeness. But fancy yourself on a desolate island in company with several thousand fellow-beings, with just a few ship-biscuits, barely sufficient for a day's provisions, and with no hope of immediate relief. It is under conditions like these that human nature becomes perverse. There is a general stampede and rush for the means of life—a struggle for existence, in which the bestial instincts gain mastery over the finer qualities of man. And if some of the nobler souls escape becoming murderers of their fellow-men for the sake of a morsel, it is only because they have hearts stout enough to take their own lives by preference."

"That's a horrid picture!"

"It is the picture you have beheld all your life, and the loss of which you are now lamenting *on moral grounds*. I repeat my challenge. Excepting the crimes due to the jealousies of the sexes, or occasioned by mental aberrations, could you name me a single crime that is not traceable, directly or indirectly, to

poverty or the fear of poverty? Add to that the thousands of poor wretches who, under the shadow of your own palace and cathedral, walk the streets in shame, forced to it mostly by poverty—or ignorance, the result of poverty—and then tell me where the *moral obligation* comes in to perpetuate the institution which is the primary cause of all this."

"You introduce a lot of irrelevant matter. These deeds," pointing to the parchments, "secure to their owners certain rights, which can be withheld only by the committal of an immoral act."

"You argue more like a lawyer than a bishop. That is, you are pleading morality as a justification for perpetuating the grossest of all immoralities."

"Sir!"

"Oh, you need not be outraged! Maybe you are doing so in ignorance. But the fact remains, nevertheless, as I will show you. Suppose I owe a man a sum of money, but that he has neither a note from me nor any witnesses to prove me his debtor. Would it then be *moral* in me to refuse payment because the creditor could not prove my indebtedness?"

"That would be grossly immoral, indeed."

"Or suppose that a man did possess a writing which set out that I was his debtor, but that I had paid the debt or never received the loan, or that the writing was a forgery. Indeed, I allow you to suppose any explanation you please, the facts being that I did not owe any money to Jones, although he possessed a deed to the contrary. Would Jones, under such circumstances, still have a *moral* claim on me? And would it be my *moral* duty to thrust those dependent on me into hopeless poverty, and pay Jones the amount set forth in the document?"

"Certainly not."

"Then your moral argument, based on the fact that these people possess parchments, falls to the ground if you cannot show the *justice* of the claim. You would have to show first, *what none of your clique has as yet attempted*, that the earth belongs *of right* to the parchment lairds."

"You travesty the Bible."

"No; it is you who travesty it. The verse in question reads, 'The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.' Show me a parchment signed by *this* Lord, and its provisions shall be carried out. Of course," I added, as a precaution, remembering the great talent for "interpretations" which Bishops sometimes display, "you would have to convince us first of the genuineness of the signature."

There must have been a sting in my last remark, for the Bishop, hitherto full of meekness and humility, suddenly flared up.

"The Lord you speak of has given us certain commandments," he said in a severe tone, "which it is my duty to see should not be broken. You have the masses with you because you appeal to their sordid natures, and tempt them with filthy lucre. It is for this reason that we are here, to remind you and the people of the commandment, 'Thou shalt not covet.' "

This piece of ecclesiastical strategy took me by surprise. I had no immediate reply ready, and had no time to think of one. For before the Bishop had finished his little impromptu sermon, a brawny man with an honest sunburnt face, wearing a smock and slouched hat, sprang forward, like a lion suddenly roused, on hearing the words, "Thou shalt not covet." His

appearance was so sudden and unexpected, his countenance so earnest and determined, that it froze the rest of the sentence in the Bishop's throat.

"Thou—shalt—not—covet," he repeated with great deliberation, making a short pause after each word. "That's me, Bishop. It's I who am so covetous as to want a loaf—*a whole loaf*, mind you—for every one of my children. Each of them has been sent by God, and every one of them has a mouth; and you have told me that God never sends a mouth but what he sends a loaf. I want delivery of what has been sent for my children. I will not stand by any longer and see them robbed of their share. I am covetous, you see. I covet what is theirs, and will not see them starving, and give them cause to curse the hour that has made them see the light of life, while the gifts our All-Father, intended for them, are taken from them under the authority and with the sanction of the Church."

"There, there!" said the Bishop. "Do you see now the fruits of your doings?"

"The fruits of *his* doings?" continued the farmer. "Let me tell you first the fruits of *your* doings."

And turning toward myself—"You spoke of a man owning the road that leads from the fields to the village. I have passed that road, and had to unload many and many a time. But it's not quite correct as you told the story. The landlord not only owned the highroad, but the fields and huts as well. And he didn't keep watch on the road to plunder the wayfarer, as you said he did, but spent his time in France and Italy, while I had to toil from day to day until I could barely rest my wearied bones for pain. Had he been on the highroad when I carted home my crop, and robbed

me there of it, it would have been a mercy compared to the agony I had sometimes to endure."

And after a pause, broken only by the sobs of a few women and children behind him, he continued:

"No; my landlord has never stopped me on the road. I was allowed to cart the crop home; I had it under my roof, with the children crying for food, and I durst not touch it—dared not take a handful of grain to make them a porridge—because I was backward with my rent. The crop I had gathered was not sufficient to make it up, and I under notice to quit if I could not pay up within twenty-four hours. This is far more cruel than being robbed by a highwayman—to stand between one's own hungry children and the food, warding them off lest they might be turned out of doors. I am telling you nothing but a fact, sir. The wife cut up carefully the last crust she had, divided it among our hungry children, moistened—aye, literally drenched—with her tears. Ah, my Lord Bishop, had you seen the children that night eagerly snatching the bits of crust from their mother's trembling hands, while their father was guarding his lordship's *rent* against their hunger, you would have seen what a covetous lot they were. Yet of such is the kingdom of heaven—of children who, before they had yet learnt the Sacred Rights of Property, are already conscious of the *Sacred Rights of Life*. I drove to market, sold the loaves which God had sent for my hungry bairns, and took the money to his lordship's agent."

"You have then acted as an honest man," interposed the Bishop.

"No; I acted as a thief to my own children, and may God forgive me the sin. For when I came home one of my children, the youngest, was dead, because the

mother had no milk for it; and the wife died the next day of a broken heart. And in all this misery I was threatened to be turned out of my home because I could not pay up the whole of my arrears."

"You are ungrateful, John," remonstrated the Bishop, who seemed to know him well; "for at the time, your case having been a very hard one, a collection was made for you."

"Yes, to pay his lordship with. It is he who received every penny of what the kind folks—Heaven bless them for it—have given me. It was for *him* I was begging, so that we should not be turned out of our home in the midst of winter. I say *our* home," he added, after wiping away a tear, "for it was *we* who built it, the children helping to carry the stones; but it has been stolen from us under cover of law. You did not then preach of covetousness to his lordship."

"How ungrateful of you, John, to speak thus of his lordship, after all the kindness and forbearance he had shown you. Only last Christmas he gave all the poor of the parish a free dinner, and you and your children had a good feed."

The poor farmer, overcome by grief or shame, or both, made no reply, but buried his head in his hands. The Socialist answered for him:

"They would not have been in need of his degrading charity, had he not first robbed them of the fruits of their toil."

"Oh, what wicked language!" remonstrated the Bishop; "to say this of one of the kindest landlords. Only a few years ago he granted a plot of land, and to Dissenters too, for a chapel——"

"How kind! Actually permitted Englishmen to worship their God in England!"

"And granted two acres of land to the parish at half-price for a cemetery."

"And you think it wise to remind us of the fact that the people could not even rot in their native land without his lordship's sanction?"

"What wicked language! And that of one who did the bidding of his Master by giving to the poor——"

"Who was it that made them poor?"

"Alas! it is the inscrutable will of the Lord. 'The poor ye have always with you,' and he made some poor and some rich, so that the latter should manifest their charity toward the former." *

"It is a lie and libel; it's rank blasphemy!" exclaimed John, who was stung by this remark. And had I not interfered in time, it might have gone hard with the Bishop. There was considerable confusion for some time, and I had great difficulty in restraining John's sinewy arm. At last I succeeded. And in the meantime all the Bishops had disappeared, and with them, as I thought, the last plea of landlordism—namely, the plea on moral grounds.

* *Vide* a sermon by the Bishop of Salisbury some time back.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPITAL'S LAST THREAT.

THE influential deputation now withdrew somewhat abruptly and without ceremony. The Bishops were the first to leave; next followed the Lawyers, who, prior to their departure, intimated to their several clients their desire for a prompt settlement of their accounts. The Financiers had already withdrawn to one corner of the room, evidently awaiting an opportunity of speaking to me on their own separate business. The bond that had held nobles, bishops, lawyers, and financiers together was broken; each was now only solicitous for his own individual welfare, and the class interest of each group asserted itself.

It was almost piteous to see the once haughty and insolent members of "Our Old Nobility" slinking as unsuccessful suitors out of the hall in which they had once reigned supreme. Farmer John, as they filed past him, not daring to meet his eyes, seemed quite moved by their dejected demeanor; and as soon as the door had closed on the last of them, the kind, honest, simple-hearted man, forgetful of his own past sufferings, commenced to plead for them.

"Poor fellows!" he said; "they were great sinners, it is true. But, sir, were they not as much sinned against as sinning? I mean, Were they not as much the products of false institutions as were the rest of us? And what are they going to do now? They are

not used to work, as I am; and my joy, and that of all my fellows, would be marred if we thought they were now to be condemned to undergo the pangs and sufferings from which we have just escaped. You should do something for them to reconcile them to their lot."

"My dear, good, honest John," I replied, much moved by this evidence of his noble nature; "your sympathy for them does you credit. But they really neither need nor deserve it. No hardship has been done them, and certainly no injustice. They have been deprived of nothing to which they have any right; on the contrary, they have been left in possession of much to which others—yourself, for instance—could show a much better claim."

"They are welcome to it, I am sure, for now I and men like me can soon acquire as much as we want."

"To be sure you can. Nor need you be troubled on their account. The majority of them have more than sufficient to enable them to live in ease and comfort; and as for their children——"

"It is of them that I was thinking."

"As for their children, they will grow up under new conditions, and learn to adapt themselves to the new order of things. They will enter into the new world —a world into which none need be afraid to enter; a world in which no one willing to work shall suffer from poverty, or be haunted by the fear of it; a world in which the struggle will be between man and Nature, and not between man and man; a world in which each will enjoy the fruits of his own toil, in which none will be secured privileges at the expense of his fellows, in which work will not be only the only passport to life, but also to true nobility."

"Nobility!" interrupted the Socialist. "We have had more than enough of nobilities and aristocracies."

"Nay, we have heard too little of true nobility, too few real aristocrats. The better worker is always the better man, and the best worker the best citizen—the *first*, the foremost, the *aristos* or *aristocrat* in the true sense. The more self-made or Nature's aristocrats we have the better for all. The Newtons, Shakespeares, and Nightingales; the Watts, Cartwrights, and Darwins; such are the real aristocrats, the leaders and torch-bearers of civilization. 'Our old nobility,' like your 'capital,' was made up of sheepskins and paper. *True nobles*, like *real capital*, can only benefit, and not injure, and should be encouraged instead of being feared or fought."

"I am ready to agree with you on the first point; but as to capital——"

"What!" I exclaimed in surprise. "Not yet cured of your madness? What harm has *real capital* ever done to anyone? Or, at any rate, what harm *can* it do to anyone where the opportunities of Nature are alike free to all? Across the street is a big plowshare maker. Is he not a laborer, and are not his plows—*the type of real capital*—accumulated labor? You say he may demand exorbitant prices. But you forget that the iron and coal mines are open, and the forests free. Have you ever known a trader sulking with his goods by demanding exorbitant prices unless he had a monopoly of some sort? Is not quite the contrary true? *Were not your great and standing grievances keen competition and low prices?*"

"Yes, for manufactured articles, but not for capital."

"*But now we have no other capital in the market except what is manufactured*, and that is precisely *real*

capital. Not, indeed, because there is any necessity for the term 'capital' at all. For a plow, a saw, or a plane might be just as well called a 'commodity' as a shirt or a loaf of bread. *And anything which is not of the nature of an artificial commodity is no longer vendible.*"

"Hold hard! Let me digest this fact. It is only that I begin to see your meaning, and—by Jove! Why capital is——"

"Nothing but a name; an abstraction which sometimes means a plow or a mill, sometimes lands and slaves, rivers and houses; and sometimes—or, rather, mostly—parchments and papers, *the bonds on future production.* Once let land, rivers, and mines be free, and then these bonds are gone. The only wealth or, 'capital'—I hate to hear the stupid word—a person can then own is that which he has created. Machinery? Yes; and, as you say, he could withhold it from use; and if he is a fool would certainly do so. But if he is not he will, instead of withholding his machinery until the rust has eaten it up, send out travelers and circulars, and tempt the people to buy or to hire, by offering all manner of easy terms. Do you not think so?"

The Socialist sank back into his chair, elbows on the table, and rested his head in his two hands. He looked bewildered, as if a new light had suddenly broken in upon him.

"What need the people care now," I continued, "if any man likes to dress himself in velvet and ermine, and to call himself a lord, and the parchments in his pockets 'capital,' so long as the land with all that is in and on it—that is, with all its potentialities—is free. All that man requires comes from land; the 'capital' that was required for production was simply a permit

to make use of the natural resources. The road to the land was through the bank, and that road was open but to few. The check that was necessary to make production possible was a *permit* or *the price of a permit*, to use the forces of Nature. But now that the land is free——"

Here our conversation was interrupted by a short, stout, vulgar, self-satisfied-looking man; one of the fore-mentioned financiers, whose presence I had forgotten for the moment.

"I am sorry to interrupt you," he commenced, "but your time may not be wasted in listening to what I have to say. I am a practical man, and as such have been consulted on many questions of importance by those in almost as exalted positions as yours. I have not come to discuss with you abstract theories about justice, morality, liberty, and all that kind of thing; that's not in my line; I don't deal in sentiment. Doubtless you want to do something for the poor. Now I don't object to that in moderation, and might even render you valuable assistance if I approve of the means. But I deem it right to warn you of what must inevitably follow if you should kill off all enterprise."

"Our object is to encourage enterprise, not to kill it; provided, of course, that the enterprise is not of a mischievous character."

"But your legislation, sir, will kill out all enterprise, and drive all the capital, upon which the workers are entirely dependent, out of the country."

I involuntarily burst out laughing. Here was a man—a *capitalist*, as my Socialist friend would call him—threatening to run away unless I taxed his capital rather than land; while the Socialist thought of driv-

ing him out of the country by a property tax. I exchanged glances with the Socialist and said:

"Pray be a little more explicit. In the first place, how will it stifle enterprise?"

"Well, you see, it's like this: A man desirous of making provision for the future accumulates his money instead of spending it; but, in the hope of future gain, instead of letting it lie idle, may start some useful enterprise. Such actions ought to receive every encouragement."

"Yes; industry, energy, and enterprise ought to be encouraged; and since now every citizen is secured the full possession of all that is due to his industry and enterprise——"

"That's just what you do not do, and I will prove it to you. Let me give you a typical case. Supposing I took up some useless waste land—say a plot on some out-of-the-way moor—and built a hotel or hydropathic establishment, trying to make it into a health resort. You could not call that an illegitimate enterprise. Now, how would you tax me?"

"You would be taxed according to the unimproved value of your land. That is, you would not be taxed according to the use you were making of the land; nor according to the value of your buildings; nor the trade you may be doing; but according to the value of the bare land, irrespective of improvements. In the case you have supposed, you would at first be taxed according to its value as moor land. Surely that is more encouragement to enterprise than when, as in old times, which you seem to regret, you were threatened with property taxes, local rates on the value of the property you have built, in addition to a ground rent, and that whether your business paid or not."

"So far so good. But supposing my venture turned out a great success, and that people are attracted in large numbers, buildings springing up all around me, until my hotel forms the center of a thriving town. This, of course, would send land values up, and my plot, I will presume, is the most valuable. Would you then still tax away all the 'unearned increment,' as you call it?"

"Certainly, and much to your own advantage. For in that case there would be required a local fund for roads, lighting, drainage, etc., which would add to your comfort as well as improve your business prospects. You could not, in common fairness, be exempt from contributing your quota of public expenditure."

"But to tax away all the value of my land under such circumstances would be unjust, since it is I who gave it the value."

"How so? You do not create land values by building hotels on it. So long as your hotel remains planted in the midst of a desolate moor you would pay a tax for moor lands. But when the moor passes into a city you will pay a tax for city land, and that because you have not made the city."

"And suppose I built a whole township on the spot on speculation, and people then came to live in my houses?"

"That would not alter the case. The principle is the same. Why should you be exempt from its operations?"

"Because I have risked my money. If my speculation failed would you compensate me?"

"If it failed? Will you please tell me what elements of failure and success you are thinking of ?"

"Why, suppose I erected a thousand houses, and nobody came to live in them?"

"In that case there would be no increased value, and hence no increased tax. But if the people did come to live in your houses, then any increased value of the land would be due to *their* presence, and hence they are entitled to share in its benefits."

"And what reward have I for my enterprise?"

"A successful business; and, if your foresight was really a good one, the most envied position in the town."

Here followed a short pause, after which the enterprising spokesman of the financiers resumed:

"In that case you'll drive all the capital out of the country."

"But why?"

"Because there is no outlet for it. Nobody will care to invest his money on such terms. You simply put an end to all legitimate means of investment."

"Not at all. *Legitimate means* of investment are now more plentiful than ever, since you may do with your 'capital' what you please without let or hindrance."

"That's just it. Now, if you don't know anything else about business, surely you will understand the law of supply and demand, and that this law regulates the money market as every other market. There was a time in this country when the money market was so brisk that it was thought necessary to limit by law the rate of interest to twenty per cent. That was, of course, because capital was scarce, and the demand for it great. Since then, however, as you know, the rate of interest came down, and at times was as low as two per cent. Do you know why?"

"I suppose because there was a greater proportion of lenders to borrowers."

"That is so. And now that you have made land free—that, in consequence thereof, people earn high wages, and the wealth is distributed throughout the community—nearly everybody is in a position to lend, but no one wliling to borrow, and money is literally *below par*. You look surprised at that. Well, I have a few thousand pounds. So have my friends here. What are we to do with them? Will you have the money as a loan on behalf of the State?"

"We do not need it. Our revenue is not only sufficient to meet current expenses, but leaves us a balance wherewith to wipe off our national debt; so that future generations should not be saddled with burdens imposed by the folly and wickedness of their ancestors."

"There you are. This is the answer we meet with everywhere."

"In that case," I said, chiefly for the benefit of my Socialist friend,, "we evidently do not need any laws against usury; but such a 'glut of capital' should stimulate rather than stifle enterprise. There are plenty of means for safe investments. For instance, by building more substantial homes for your children; by giving them a better education; by planting orchards and flower gardens. And if you think of creating more than you need in order to give your children a start in life, you could build hotels, warehouses, theaters, or pleasure resorts, the revenue of which—while it lasts——"

"That's just it, *while it lasts*. If I put £10,000 into it, my children might get perhaps £8000 back. They certainly could get no profit on the money invested. Buildings want looking after, and so does every other form of wealth, and nobody will look after it without

pay. And so we have come to a pretty pass, that capital, instead of commanding interest, has to pay to people for accepting it."

"Not so. You would in that case pay for the *conservation* or preservation of wealth. And if a man looks after your goods for you, it is only right that you should compensate him for the trouble."

"Then is capital to have nothing at all?" he asked, in an injured tone.

"Capital? Who is *he*, and what has he done?"

"Well, then, since you are so particular, I'll put it this way: Am *I* to have nothing for my capital? *True capital*, as you call it, is the reward of abstinence and industry; and am I to have no reward for my abstinence and industry?"

"You have your reward in the undisturbed possession of your savings. Is not that reward enough? Or do you, perhaps, think that because you may have saved a little more than your neighbors, that this should entitle you to claim their savings in addition to your own?"

"We never claimed; the people who wanted accommodation from us, who wanted our money, were always glad to pay interest. But now, under your rule, nobody seems to want any loans."

"So you think, perhaps, that we should make paupers in order to keep up the ancient and noble institution of usury? I have heard similar talk in the old days, when people objected to general prosperity, on the grounds that then the masses would no longer work for a mere subsistence, or starvation wages, and hence leave no 'profit' or 'interest' for 'capital.'"

"That's just the case now, and the nation will be ruined."

"Ruined, forsooth! When, according to your own showing, nobody wants to borrow, and nearly everybody is in a position to lend. Ruined, because no one is now able to get the whip hand over his fellows, and because a few usurers cannot command interest on their money! The only interest of a nation is the well-being of its members; and the only reward, the only 'profit' of one's labor and capital, is the ability to support life in comparative ease and comfort."

"That's all very fine talk; but what good is my capital to me?"

"If you have no use for it yourself, offer it to your neighbors. And if they have no use for it either, then it is clear that that particular form of wealth is not wanted at all—that, in fact, there is an *over-production.* And this will demonstrate to you that over-production does not mean want, as you have been taught, but profusion."

"That may be all very well in theory, but, as I told you, we are practical men, and did not come here to theorize. We now know what to expect under your legislation, and we intend to leave this country at once, taking all our capital with us."

"Take *what* with you?"

"All our capital."

"Yes, yes; but what? The land?"

"N-o-o. Not the land."

"The mines, rivers, air, sunshine, or perhaps the rain?"

"N-o-o-o; but our capital."

"That's just what I am trying to get at. What are you going to take? Roads, harbors, docks, buildings, mills?"

"We own many of these,"

"But will you take them with you, or pull them down, so as to take the material with you?"

"No! neither."

"Well, what will you take, then? Spades, plows, sewing and other machines, or the mining and manufacturing plants, which now, indeed, are as fully employed as they can be?"

"Well, they are ours."

"Not quite all of them; and even if all the existing machinery did belong to you and your friends; as our forest and mines are now open to the people, they would soon make as many more as may be required. But, as practical men, do you seriously propose taking such things with you?'"

He hesitated, and I saw that he was commencing to recognize the hollowness of his threats.

He then said: "If we withdrew all our machinery, have you considered what the consequences would be?"

"No; I have not thought much about it; but, nevertheless, I can imagine what would happen. America, Germany, France, and other countries would probably be glad to learn that there is a country of over thirty million inhabitants in want of all kinds of implements, and would glut our market—the several nations competing with each other. Have *you* considered what effect that would have on the value of your old spades and plows?"

"But with what will you purchase these things if we take our capital away?"

"With the grain and wool, and iron and coal, and all other kinds of produce, of which you and your ilk used to deprive us. Talk about what thirty-five million workers in one of the richest countries on the

face of the globe are going to buy with! Sir, you must have studied your Political Economy at Oxford or Cambridge, else you could not possibly ask such stupid questions."

"That's all very well, but by withdrawing our capital we could throw the people out of employment, and thus *force* them to come to our terms."

"No, no, my good sir, that you cannot do, and you know it. The position is simply this: You possess certain houses, mills, and machinery. On leaving the country you can choose between taking with you so much old iron and timber as you may find convenient, or else sell it prior to your departure for what you can get for it. And having a rather high opinion of your business abilities, I have no doubt in my mind as to which course you will prefer. The only loss we shall sustain is that of your presence."

"You will then have to close the Stock Exchange, as there will not be an individual left to frequent it."

"Even in that you are mistaken. Instead of closing the building we shall make a true *Exchange* of it; a place where people shall exchange their several products and conduct legitimate business; and then the inscription above its portal will have more meaning than at present. So if you think of leaving the country, all we can say to you is——"

"Good riddance," interposed the Socialist; and Farmer John added, "Amen!".

CHAPTER XV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

"GOOD riddance!" was echoed by a thousand voices outside, as the small band of capitalists left the hall, folding up their parchments. And, truth to tell, even I felt my spirits revive when relieved of the presence of this most objectionable class; people who, at their best, are but human magpies, and at their worst vultures and hyenas. Still greater was my delight when presently I saw a small band of earnest, intellectual-looking men enter the hall, headed by one whom I recognized as the chairman of that memorable meeting in Trafalgar Square, at which I was elected to the high office I now held.

"Why, it's Neighbor William," I exclaimed cheerily, stretching out my hand to greet him. "You are indeed a most welcome guest."

"I hope I may prove so," he said, not coldly nor unkindly, yet with a certain reserve. "But that will depend on how far we shall be able to agree on certain points."

"What!" I exclaimed, somewhat taken back at this rejoinder; "surely you, of all men, have not come here as an opponent of the new order of things?"

"By no means. We come as friends to assist you to complete the good work you have so well begun. But whether our help will be welcome to you, is a question on which I have some misgivings."

"Will you then please tell me at once the points of possible disagreement?"

"Yes, certainly. You have purged the national hive of the drones, the national temple of the money-changers. The country now belongs to the nation in its fullest and truest sense. The people have plenty of all they desire. But man liveth not by bread alone. *Our* ideal of a model State does not consist of an assemblage of so many million human cattle with plenty of fodder and good shelter."

"Nor mine either, good neighbor. I know your ideal, and share it. I have read that charming book of yours, *News from Nowhere*, with its fascinating and beautiful picture of the England that is to be. And as I too set greater value on the development of the spiritual, or purely human, as distinguished from the mere animal qualities of the race, I would fain see it realized."

"Then why in the name of duty did you not use the absolute power at your command to abolish a system that has reduced mankind below the beasts of the field? Why champion individualism and competition with all the force of a keen, cold-blooded logic? Is not *individualism* but a euphemism for *egotism?* Does it not involve a struggle between brothers for individual advantages? Is it not, both in name and essence, identical with selfishness?"

"It is, good neighbor," I replied. "I understand the causes of your indignation. I am anxious myself to see mankind enter that beautiful land you have described to us. But I wish to get there by a safer and surer road. Even the delights of Paradise itself would be dearly purchased if we had to travel thither over the murdered bodies of our brother-men. That shooting

in Trafalgar Square of which you dreamt was a terrible affair."

He looked serious, sad, almost in despair; his noble countenance fell, and his eyes filled with tears. "Cruel evils may require cruel remedies," he replied. "Anything rather than the perpetuation of a system which continuously demands fresh human sacrifice. Rather a sudden death for a few than the perpetual damnation of the many. Besides, *then* I saw no other way out of the slough of despond. But to you there has been another way opened. What we want to know is, why *you* have not used the power with which you have been intrusted to abolish once and for all this degrading cut-throat system of competition which sets brother against brother; this product of incarnate selfishness."

"*Incarnate* selfishness. Yes, that's just it. You have practically answered your own question. If selfishness were a thing apart from man, and not incarnate in him, you might demand that it and its products should be destroyed. But selfishness is inherent and natural to human beings. It springs from the instinct of self-preservation, and can be neither ignored nor eradicated. But still, the evils it produces can be remedied; and it is just on this very instinct that I confidently rely to right them."

"What! on selfishness? Can selfishness ever be a factor for anything but evil?"

"There is no property or agency in man or nature, which cannot be a factor for either good or evil; it all depends upon circumstances. This one fact is patent and immutable: self-perservation is the strongest instinct both in man and animals. It is a law of nature, which you cannot repeal at St. Stephen's. It

has always been, and forever will remain, the mainspring of all human actions. Where people are so conditioned, by their own artificial institutions and regulations, that the struggle for existence is everywhere between man and man, and not between man and Nature; where the profit of one necessarily involves the loss of another; where, in short, the interests of the members of a community are, in consequence of bad legislation, antagonistic, instead of being identical; there this principle of self-preservation will always produce just that kind of selfishness—or say rather merciless greed—we are all deploring."

"Again we ask, and now rather more surprised than at first, seeing that you agree with us on the main point, why you have not put a summary stop to this policy of selfishness?"

"I will tell you, if you will but have a little patience with me, for my answer must necessarily be a long one. In the first place, let us be clear as to what are the points that need reforming. You continually harp on the one string—competitive system. But reflect for a moment, and you will find that what you have been aggrieved by was not the competitive system, but the inequalities in human society and the injustice done to the many. Why you fought against the competitive system was simply because, in *your* opinion, *that* was the cause of all the trouble. Why *I* do not fight against it is because I do not share that opinion. But this only by the way, for I cannot say that I myself am enamored with the commerical competition of to-day. But why I would not meddle with it is because it is but a consequence of a general derangement, and will disappear with the disease, of which it is *not* the cause, but a mere *symptom*. The point at issue, then, is as to

what should be the precise polity which should regulate the conduct of the community. That point we would have to leave to be decided by the community; that is, each member for himself. You would have me coerce their social relations into some prescribed form; that is, prescribe to the people the habits and customs they should follow."

"You're talking nonsense when you talk of prescribing habits and customs."

"I am glad you see it in the same light as I do; it is just the point I wanted to bring home to you. People will behave, whether individually or collectively, according to their habits and customs. But habits and customs are not changed suddenly by Acts of Parliament, but are the result of old wont and usage. You desire that people should live together in love and harmony; I agree. But remember that such results can only be brought about gradually, and by providing the conditions necessary to their development. You cannot force people into such relations against their inclination; and that at the present moment they are not inclined to adopt your ideal, you know very well. After all, it is but natural they should not; and it would be disastrous to the very ideal we are aiming at if we tried to force them."

"Why so?"

"Because the people are as yet unfit for such an ideal state. A running train is not brought to a sudden standstill by turning off the steam; and it would be most disastrous if you tried to bring about such a sudden stoppage by main force. Nor can human dispositions be changed at a moment's notice. Communism is a union of love; and love must be voluntary. You cannot force people into harmony

against their inclination; you have tried that with single couples, and have framed all manner of laws whereby to coerce husband and wife to live together in loving harmony and union. But wherever that love and harmony was naturally wanting, you have not succeeded; and where you have succeeded it was only because they would have loved each other even in the absence of your laws. Do you hope to be more successful in tying together thirty-five million people against their inclinations by the same bond which was not strong enough to hold two people together? You are trying to force Nature; trying to conquer the will of thirty-five millions by your own."

"But it is for their own good."

"Then let them find that out for themselves, and you will find that that selfishness of theirs will be a far more powerful lever to bring about that ideal state than either truncheon or bayonet, or any regulations scribbled on paper. Communism, if it is to be a real thing and not a mere sham, can only exist where it is voluntary, and therefore can only be inaugurated by common consent. It means a union of love, where the bond of reciprocal attachment need not necessarily be personal, but some common interest. That given, and you will soon have a communistic society; without it, never. Had you ever so many armed legions at your command, you could not make the people love each other, nor establish peace with drawn swords."

"But is the general welfare not sufficient common interest?"

"It would be, if the people were already alive to their true interests. But to most people the 'common interest' is a mere sentiment, and as such would not be sufficient for the people as they are. It might be

sufficient for you, and such as you; and that not because you are, strictly speaking, less selfish, but because you are more enlightened; because you know that all would be happier for it; and your happiness consists in the consummation of that ideal. But the masses, the ignorant masses, trained through centuries under a system of 'each for himself and the devil take the hindmost'; under a system of grabbing, legalized stealing, swindling, and gambling; in an atmosphere of hypocrisy and cant, where lying, under the name of diplomacy and business, was a much-esteemed art; where the dissemination of religion and morality became a business, the post of the moralist, called by its occupant a 'living,' being bought and sold by auction, and considered as 'good' or 'bad,' according to the number of pieces of silver it brought in; to the masses to whom brotherly love is an empty phrase, and the fighting for their daily bread has for so long been the main object of their solicitude: to them what you ask would appear as a great sacrifice, in the eyes of many of the best among them a dangerous experiment—or, in nineteenth century language, 'a bad spec.' They must first be educated into the new order; you have to approach them as you would a shy and hungry dog who, on so many previous occasions, when expecting a bone or a piece of bread, had received the whip instead. In short, these people, just as they are, with all their high talents for spinning, digging, weaving and—betting; and notwithstanding their undoubted good qualities—both actual and potential—are as yet unfit for forming a community such as you desire."

"But, then, why will you not help on its development?"

"I am helping it on, and that in the best way. For

all we can do is to prepare the soil and rely on Nature to do the rest. You would have me stop competition by law, and tell each of the thirty-five millions of people what to do and how to do it. Do you not see how impossible it would be for one man, or a dozen of men, to devise a system that should have the approval of all? and if you were to exact their submission and obedience by force, would that be a Communistic State? Why, you would have resistance and friction without end. But leave them to themselves, your only interference being to prevent one individual obstructing another, and they will soon find what is best for them; they will soon discover the true meaning of the old saw, 'Union is strength,' and that the co-operation of several in an undertaking of whatever kind is to the best interest of all."

"We are agreed on that. But then your interference should also extend to where one man tries to take away the living of another by underselling him; where one soapmaker, for instance, tries to concentrate the whole industry into his own hands, and to push others out of the market. In short, if you are to protect the liberties of the individuals, you will have to stop competition."

"You are mistaken, and that because you are forgetting that man's actions are modified by altered circumstances."

"But have you not yourself said that people's dispositions are not changed at a moment's notice? And if they were greedy yesterday, will they not be so today?"

"Yes; but the conditions under which this greed can be satisfied are different. If Brown, for instance, strove to get the control of the soap market into his

own hands, it was not out of consideration for the cleanliness or health of his fellows; nor because he could or would, by his own individual labor, supply them all with soap. He did it because he could make a profit on every man he employed. But this profit —or, 'surplus value'—is only possible while there is a surplus population; or, as learned economists and able editors expressed it, a free labor market. But when there are no longer any unemployed, excepting those who no longer require employment; when Dick, Tom, and Harry are no longer dependent for their existence on the favor of soapmaker Brown, or landlord Jones, such surplus profits are no longer possible. This is not mere theory; for you remember that an increase of wages was always feared by capitalists, because it might cut profits so fine as to make it unprofitable for them to continue their works. You remember how greedy Brown threatened to give up being a task-master, as soon as he found that his slaves no longer yielded him his 2½ per cent."

"And so you think that now he will shut up his factory or cease competing?"

"I don't know. What I do know for certain is, that he will cease to fleece his workers; and that because the latter won't let him; because, in short, the workers are as selfish and as greedy as the master. Now that they are independent they will ask higher wages than they earn, and the employer will offer them less than they are worth. But they will soon find their level."

"And is this system of ultra-individualism and keen competition to be the be-all and end-all of everything?"

"No; it is but the beginning of everything. Selfish people will still seek their own self-interests; and under

such conditions, can you doubt for a moment as to where they will find it?"

"In combination!"

"Yes, most assuredly. And it is not such a new discovery either. Men have found it out long ago. The natural tendency has always been toward united action. It was not man's natural depravity that made him fight his brother, but necessity, the instinct of self-preservation, drove him to it. There was not room for all in this world under the old forms of government. Only few could be accommodated in comfort. The large body of the people had to scramble for the means of life, and many had to succumb altogether. Under such circumstances each had to scramble for himself. But this was not because they did not see the benefits of united action, but because all could not be saved, and nobody wished to be the one to be sacrificed. Once this fear done away with——"

"And you think they will act more in unison?"

"Of course they will; their self-interest will prompt them. One hundred men, each tilling a small plot of land, would soon find out the advantage of working together, which will make possible the employment of machinery and more permanent works at a lesser expense to each. Again, plenty of everything and no fear of poverty, will gradually heal them of the disease of insatiable greed. People never hoard things of which they are assured there will always be plenty. Water is treasured only in countries where it is scarce."

"And is that to establish Communism?"

"If Communism is good and natural, then it will. I myself think it is, and that it will be the ultimate form of social bond. But it can only thrive under natural conditions. The seeds and germs of it we

could behold sprouting everywhere, even under that old and pernicious system to which we have put an end. People entered into partnerships and worked together for each other's good through life, the only bond that kept them faithful to each other being their common interest. Joint-stock companies and co-operative societies, to say nothing of municipal and district councils and state undertakings: were not all of these evidence that the tendency of man is not to live in reciprocal fear and enmity, but to co-operate for mutual advantages? But the plant could not develop, for the soil was inimical to such fruits."

"It was indeed. And so you think that the natural tendency is toward Communism; and that in the midst of plenty men will cease to be greedy."

"What makes man greedy, but the fear of want? What makes man chary of helping another, but the fear of parting with what he might need for himself? In the past, to look after one's brother often meant the neglect of one's children. And yet men were kind to one another, still assisted each other, when they could do so without endangering their own existence or that of those dependent upon them. Greedy of material things! Why, of what can they be greedy, when they know that their labors will always command sufficient of everything and to spare?

"To make man good, kind, and noble you must first satisfy his material needs. When one's whole time and energy are needed to fight for the bare necessaries of life, what opportunities can there be for cultivating those higher qualities which distinguish man from the brute? Poverty is not a genial soil for culture. Only the weeds of ignorance can thrive on it. There can be no moral considerations side by side with starvation

and ignorance, nor intellectual needs while the material wants remain unsatisfied."

"True, very true. We find this exemplified all over the world. Poverty, ignorance, and crime always go together."

"That is so. Therefore let us banish poverty and the fear of poverty. This once accomplished, you may rely on human nature for the rest. You will not transform the ignorant and vulgar peasant into a cultured man all at once. Such miracles are possible on paper only. But you will rouse his ambition to be 'as good as his neighbor.' Thus you may turn another propensity of man, generally counted among his vices, to good account, by making use of his vanity to lead him on the path to knowledge and culture, which, in the end, are the death of vanity."

"Their vanity?"

"Yes, that propensity which impels men to imitate those whom they regard as superior to themselves. You have seen this all your life. The costermonger who, by some lucky windfall, came suddenly into a fortune, dressed and lived as near as possible like a 'gentleman.' True, it did not make a gentleman of him; but the ambition was there, and, having the money, he tried to secure to his children what he felt he lacked himself. He dressed them like guys, but gave them a good education; in fact, would have gladly crammed whole universities down their throats if they could but have digested them. And although he himself died a vulgar rich man, he left more cultured children behind him to take his place. Every one of your cultured men of to-day, be he ever so refined, has risen to his position owing to the working of this self-same principle, straight from his savage ancestors.

Now that people have their material wants satisfied, you will find them more ready to attend to the cultivation of their higher faculties. Do you doubt these conclusions?"

"No; for while you have been engaged with deputations we have been busy outside, and have proved their truth. We were dissatisfied with your individualism, and thought to counteract it by awakening the people to the benefits of co-operation, to the beauties of art and science, and to the possibilities of a more perfect social life. You are right; we did find them more ready than of yore to listen to us, and even anxious to adopt our proposals. We have already done much, and should have sought your co-operation, but were afraid you would disapprove of our activities."

"I? Not I. My sole object was to clear away the rubbish, and to prepare the ground for your actions. Go on, and make as many cultured men as you can, and you will find that you have made just as many Communists. And having done so, what more is there required to tell them to act in their own interests?"

"That being so, there is but one other point to complete the regeneration of society."

"And that is ?"

"That there should be perfect equality among all citizens."

"Have you not got that already?"

"Not while you are Boss. Now that your work is done, of course you will resign. What! you hesitate?"

I did hesitate; and gladly would I suppress this part of my dream, were it not that duty compels me to record the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I hesitated, because I was thinking for

excuses to urge why I should not be required to resign. Yes, I actually thought of excuses that would enable me to stick to the office to which I had all my life most objected. Perhaps it was Puck, who was sporting with me. Perhaps it was human nature, which, while reason was dormant, asserted itself. But I did object to resign, and made a strong stand against any such proposal. There is something alluring in being a ruler of men; to be able to say to this man "Come," and he cometh; and to that man "Go," and he goeth. And, therefore, perhaps, it is so dangerous to put such a mighty weapon in the hands of any single individual, be he ever so well-intentioned. Put not your trust in princes is a sound advice, but it did not occur to me in my dream, while in the full enjoyment of my absolute power. I refused to resign, and they threatened to expel me by main force, William foremost among them.

"Get up, get up!" he called to me. And somebody actually put his hands on my shoulders. I was speechless. I tried to resent the insolence, to shake off the rude hands, but could not move a muscle. "Get up," I heard a second time. And somebody hit me right in the face. For the moment I thought I had been shot at, and I made a quick motion with my hand toward my nose, when I felt a second assault and heard cheerful laughter, and as I opened my eyes and looked up, it was my child, who was just raising her rattle to repeat her assault, laughing cheerily; while her mother was calling out the third time, "Get up, my dear; get up. You must be quite stiff, sleeping all night on that hard chair."

. . . . .

I have told my dream, and everybody can put on it

his own interpretation. To myself it was a revelation, a beacon light illuminating the road along which reformers will have to travel if they would speedily and safely reach the desired goal. It has shown me the many pitfalls in the way of the pilgrims, and the dangers of the many fair, but delusive, promises by which many of our earnest leaders are diverted from the one true path. To me the whole dream has but one meaning and but one moral. It is this: Let all the various sections in charge of the van of progress cease their internecine feuds, their petty differences and jealousies, and, instead of pulling in so many different directions, unite their efforts toward one common aim. Nor is there any doubt in my mind as to the direction in which they should proceed. They all wish to reform the institutions of the land. Then let them conquer the land first, and, if it be found necessary, quarrel about the methods of governing it after the enemy has been driven out. To do this they should make common cause against the common foe, and inscribe high on their banners the legend:

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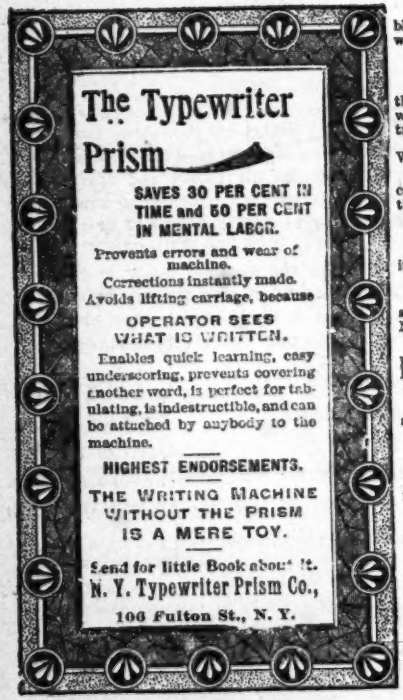
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